

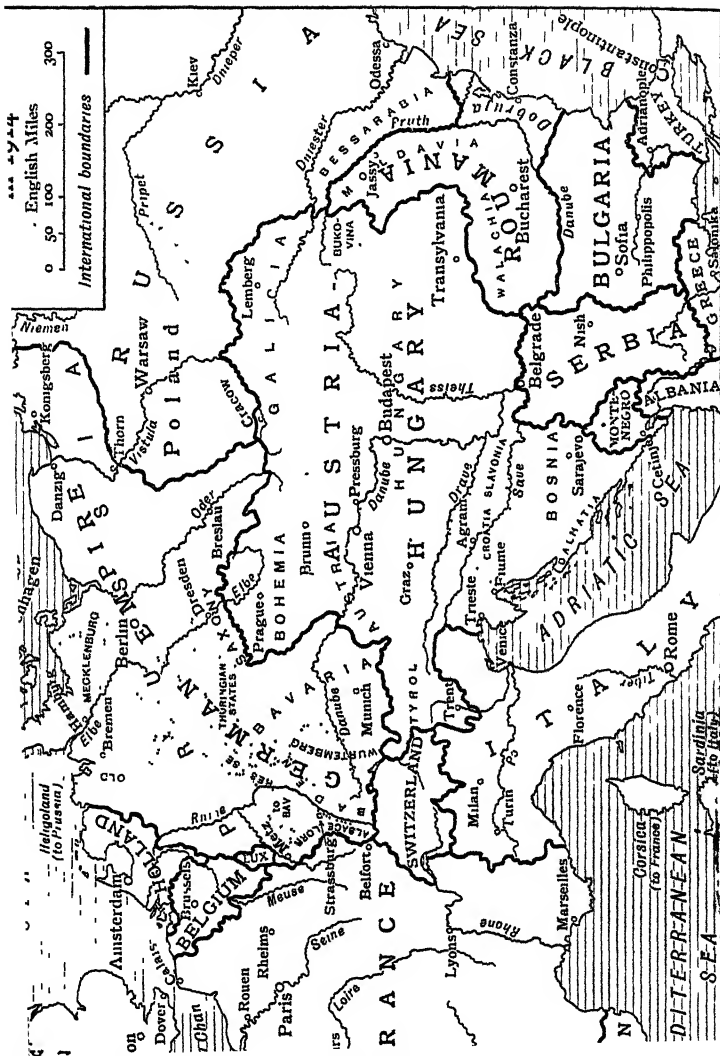
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR  
(FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)



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# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

(FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)

BY

T. O. HODGES

MACMILLAN AND CO, LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON



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## PREFACE

THIS book is intended primarily for use in Indian Schools and Colleges, it being suggested that it may prove suitable for the last year at school, and the first at College. I am, however, far from hoping that its use will be confined to the class room, for which, indeed, it has no peculiar qualifications, save that of simplicity. There are various matters arising out of, or connected with, the War, which I have purposely refrained from touching, deeming it either impossible, or inexpedient, to deal with them.

Apart from official records, dispatches, etc., I owe a great deal to the works by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Col. John Buchan, and Mr Maynard Bridge, and to the advice and help of various officers, journalists, and friends.

T. O. H.

CHELSEA, *Feb.* 1920

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# PART I.

## PRELIMINARY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### How the War Began.

ON the first page of this book is a map of Central Europe. Almost exactly in the middle of it will be seen the German Empire. Now, since this Empire has been the cause of four years of the greatest suffering to which mankind has ever been subjected, it will be well, first of all, to examine of what it consists. It will be seen at once that Germany is divided into many separate Kingdoms, just as India is divided into many Provinces, but in Germany the same language is spoken in each Kingdom. There are many such kingdoms, such as Saxony, Bavaria, Baden, and Wurtemberg; but the most important of them all is the Kingdom of Prussia, the King of which is called the German Emperor.

#### The Rise of Prussia.

Up to the middle of the last Century, the lands which now make up the German Empire were independent

of each other, but in the year 1870, at the end of a short but bloody war with France, they were united under one ruler. After the defeat of France, Prussia became very powerful, and all the other countries of Germany wished to associate themselves with her in her victory, and thereby to acquire reflected glory.

Prussia, then, in 1870, under her King William I., and her great Statesman, Bismarck, joined the other parts of Germany to herself; and the Confederacy was termed the German Empire. From that time Germany determined to expand and to gain power, and, as she had conquered France by means of war, so to conquer the rest of the world by any means that might become necessary. She was not yet bent on actual warfare, and she tried first to develop her power by obtaining the Trade of the World in a peaceful manner. At home she subsidised the various industries, and lent State assistance to various private-enterprises, while abroad she encouraged her traders in every part of the world, very much as, in the Eighteenth Century, the British Government encouraged the East India Company.

### **William the Second.**

In 1888, there succeeded to the throne of Prussia the grandson of the first Emperor William. This was the Emperor William II., who in himself embodied the German spirit. He thought of nothing but to become the greatest Ruler of the Greatest Nation in the World. He was not content that Germany had become a great European Power: he wished to become a World Power. The chief obstacles in his way were the two other great World Powers, England and France. Between France

and Germany, there had existed for many years a bitter hatred, and the Emperor could not control his jealousy of the British Empire and the British Dominions beyond the seas.

He therefore conceived the idea of a gigantic new German Empire, which should comprise, first, the whole of Central Europe, and, secondly, Turkey-in-Europe and Turkey-in-Asia, and which should extend as far as Egypt on the one hand, and India on the other.

With these aims in view, he organised the greatest and the most efficient army of modern times : indeed, so efficient was this army that not only all the Germans themselves but many other nations believed that it was invincible.

He made a great mistake.

### *The Immediate Causes of the War.*

To the South and the South-east of Germany lies the Empire of Austro-Hungary, an Empire which, like Germany, is composed of several different countries ; but, in the case of Austro-Hungary, the peoples of these countries, although they do not speak the same language, nor belong to the same race, are all subjects of the Emperor of Austria, who is also the King of Hungary.

Austro-Hungary, like France in 1870, was defeated by Prussia in 1866 ; but since German was the language of a very large number of the inhabitants of the combined countries, and was the official language throughout the whole Empire, and since the Austrian and German nations were both Teutonic in origin, it was not long

before an alliance was formed between them. In this alliance Germany naturally ruled: indeed, the whole policy of Austro-Hungary, not only foreign, but also domestic, had, until 1914, for many years, been dictated, or at least suggested, by Germany. Thus, although the first blow in the Great War was struck by Austria, Austria was not acting on her own initiative, but was acting at the suggestion, and even at the instigation, of Germany.

### Serbia.

The immediate causes of the war lay neither in Germany nor in Austria, but in Serbia, a small country which lies to the south-east of Austria. The Serbians belong to the great *Slav* race, the most important of the Slavonic nations being Russia, who looked upon herself as the protector of the smaller Slav nations in Europe. If, therefore, a great Teutonic nation, such as Austria, and a small Slavonic nation, such as Serbia, quarrelled, it was quite certain that Russia, the Great Slav nation, would help the smaller nation of her own race.

Such a quarrel occurred in 1914, the *immediate* cause being the murder at Sarajevo, on July 28th, of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the nephew and the heir of the Austrian Emperor, by a Serbian<sup>1</sup> conspiracy.

It was, doubtless, just that Austria should demand some reparation from Serbia, but the demands made by Austria in this case, and the conditions laid down by her, were so hard that Serbia could not possibly

<sup>1</sup> It has been proved that the Serbians implicated in the murder were in the pay of Austria; so that the murder was part of an organised conspiracy.



accept them. Three of Austria's demands were : (1) The control of the whole Serbian Press, (2) the control of all the Serbian schools, and (3) the control of the greater part of the administration of justice. Had Serbia yielded to these demands, she would no longer have been a free nation. As she could not unconditionally accept these terms within the time demanded by Austria, Austria on July 28th, 1914, declared war on her without further notice.

### **Russia and France.**

As the Protector of Serbia, and as the Chief of the Slavonic nations, Russia immediately declared war on Austria, and, since she knew that Germany was the instigator of Austria's policy, and that she was prepared to uphold her ally, she sent armed troops towards the German frontier. Immediately Germany demanded from Russia that she should disarm these troops. Russia took no notice of this threat, and immediately Germany declared war upon her.

We find, then, two hostile forces : on the one side, the little Slav nation, Serbia, backed by the great Slav nation, Russia ; on the other side, Germany and Austro-Hungary.

Now for many years there had been a very close friendship between Russia and France. France had promised to help Russia if Russia were attacked, and now, seeing Russia attacked by Austria and Germany, France prepared to help her.

Between Germany and France there had existed a long-standing and bitter hatred ; and Germany remembered that she had beaten France in 1870. The German

Emperor determined to attack France again, and to repeat the triumph of 1870.

Again, he made a great mistake.

### **Violation of Belgium.**

In the year 1831, when Belgium became a separate and independent nation, and again in 1839, France, Germany, and England had signed treaties, promising to protect Belgium in case of any violation of her frontiers. In 1914, therefore, when war had been declared between Germany and France, the King of the Belgians, Albert I., a brave King of a brave people, knowing that the most convenient route between France and Germany lay through his country, and hearing that the Germans were advancing towards his frontier, sent an urgent message to the King of England, asking him to demand that both Germany and France should renew their guarantees to respect the neutrality of his country. Without any delay, France renewed her promise, but Germany sent no answer. On Aug. 4th, therefore, the British Ambassador at Berlin received a telegram in which he was ordered to inform the German Government that, unless a satisfactory reply was sent within five hours, England would protect her own honour and the honour of Belgium. To this telegram no answer was sent, but it was immediately announced in Berlin that England had declared war upon Germany. The German Emperor thought that England would not be true to her word.

Again, he made a great mistake.

## CHAPTER II.

### Modern Warfare on Land.

ONE of the great differences between the fighting in the Great War and the fighting in all previous wars, is that nearly all the fighting on the Western Front was what is called "Trench-fighting."

If, after the second battle of Ypres, a traveller had started from the Belgian coast and traced the lines of the two armies from the Sea to Switzerland, he would have found a continuous succession of fortresses, most of them underground. The opposing armies were ranged in long parallel lines hidden from each other in deep trenches cut out of the ground, the fronts of which were fortified with earth-works and sand-bags, and the insides of which were very often lined with concrete. In time, a most elaborate system of these trenches was developed, and passages from one to another were dug, so that the soldiers could pass from one to the other in comparative safety. In these trenches, men ate and slept and lived and fought, all through the war. In certain cases, there was only a matter of a few yards between the German trenches and our own.

## **Trench Warfare.**

The actual fighting was conducted in various ways.

1. The soldiers in the trenches had to keep constantly on the alarm, ready to shoot with their rifles at any moving object they saw in the opposite lines.

2. Surprise attacks were continually taking place, the soldiers from one trench creeping out on dark nights and entering the enemy trench, before the enemy could hear or recognise them.

These are what would be called minor operations ; but besides these, there were attacks made in force on strong positions, in which as many as 100,000 men might be engaged on either side. The difference between our attacks and those of the Germans, lay in the fact that our men marched or ran leaving a distance of ten yards or so between each man, while the Germans always came on shoulder to shoulder, and, as the gunfire mowed down the first lines, other soldiers stepped forward to take their places. Of course this resulted in a greater loss of life for the Germans than for ourselves, as it is easier to shoot at a great moving mass than at small moving targets.

## **Artillery Work.**

At various distances behind the whole trench system were the cannon, and before an attack, the guns were directed against the enemy lines and shelled them without a minute's interruption for twenty-four or forty-eight hours, killing as many of the enemy in the trenches as possible. At the time of the attack the gunners maintained an absolutely continuous fire against the country behind the trenches to prevent the soldiers

in them from retiring, and to prevent their comrades from sending up reinforcements.

Both sides protected their lines of defence with hundreds of thousands of yards of barbed wire, and, before an attack, it was the first duty of the Artillery, situated at various distances behind the trenches, to open fire upon the barbed wire and break it up.

After all these preparations the infantry climbed out from their trenches and charged the enemy positions, the cannon meanwhile ceasing to fire.

### *Weapons and Appliances.*

#### **Weapons and Appliances.**

In order to understand what modern warfare really is, it is necessary to understand the weapons and appliances used. The principal ones are

Cannon, machine-guns, rifles, tanks, and gas.

Cannon are the biggest guns used, and the branch of the army which uses them is called the Artillery. Cannons fire shells which explode when they hit any object. The smaller cannons fire shells with a diameter of from 3 to 5 inches, and the bigger guns discharge a shell the diameter of which is sometimes as much as 17 inches. The weight of these terrible projectiles may be 2500 pounds and their length as much as six feet. Because of the enormous size and weight of these cannon they are very difficult to transport.

The machine-gun is, so to speak, a small cannon firing cartridges at the rate of about 300 a minute, the cartridges being something less than an inch in diameter.

The cartridges are placed in position and fired by machinery, hence the name.

Rifles are the weapon of the infantry. A rifle is worked by one man and fires bullets, the diameter of which is about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of an inch. The rifle is not merely used for shooting. For hand to hand fighting a sharp knife called a bayonet is fixed on to it. Bayonets were invented in France, but the finest bayonet fighters in the world are the English, and it is said that the Germans in this war were more afraid of a British bayonet charge than of anything else.

### **Tanks.**

Tanks were invented late in the war. They are moving fortresses driven by petrol. They can go over any kind of ground, for they have no wheels, only rollers inside an endless band, and they make their own tracks as they go. They are covered with such thick armour that no rifle or machine-gun bullets can hurt them. They can climb in and out of trenches and push down trees and houses, and all the time the men inside them can shoot at the enemy through loop-holes in the sides and back. They are very useful in taking "nests" of enemy machine-guns, which the infantry could not possibly attack.

### **Gas.**

Gas can hardly be called an appliance, but it has been used very largely by both the Germans and the Allies, the object being to suffocate or poison the enemy. Naturally the gas used is heavier than air, otherwise it would evaporate or rise above the atmosphere, and it is discharged at the enemy in clouds from a kind of pump.

*The Army an Organism—Fighting in the Air.*

A modern army is a gigantic organism, that is to say, it is made up of many branches, each of which is indispensable to the others and to the whole. Just as a human being is composed of a brain, limbs, a nervous system, and organs of sense, so an army contains various departments for various purposes

The brain of the army is the department known as the Staff. The Staff consists of the officers who direct all the other branches, and who work out the general plans either of attack or defence. Each army-corps, each division, each brigade has its own separate staff, but these in turn take their orders from the Supreme Command.

Corresponding to the limbs of the human body are what is called the Arms of the Service, such as the Cavalry, Infantry, Artillery, Engineers, Medical Department, and the various branches which supply all the necessities of the army.

**Communications.**

What, in the human body, we call the nervous system, is supplied in an army by an elaborate system of telephones and dispatch riders and other means of communication such as signallers, dogs, pigeons, and telegraphs.

To the senses may be compared the cavalry and airmen on the western front. The cavalry have been used very little as a fighting unit; they have been employed for observation purposes, but aeroplanes and balloons have done much the most of this kind of work. Through them the officers of the Staff have had knowledge of

the strength and numbers of the enemy, and have been able to arrange their plans of attack and defence accordingly.

### *Modern Warfare at Sea.*

Modern big guns have a very long range, and the largest can drop their projectiles on a particular spot at a distance of 20 miles. Some of the very largest are used in the navies of the world. When a battle is fought at sea, the distance separating the two ships may be anything up to 15 miles. Another extraordinary thing is that during a naval action the ships on either side are travelling at full speed.

### **Battleships and Cruisers.**

The largest fighting ships are called Battleships. They are protected by 8, 10, or 12 inch armour, and carry heavy guns, which fire shells of the diameter of from 12 to 15 inches. Their speed may be from 16 to 28 knots. The next in size, which are faster than Battleships, are called Cruisers, and their speed may be anything up to 38 knots. They do not carry such large guns, and are less heavily armoured.

Both Battleships and Cruisers carry another weapon besides guns. These are called Torpedoes. "A torpedo is a projectile shaped like a cigar, from fourteen to sixteen feet long, and carrying as much as 200 lbs. of explosive." It can be directed against any given object and is discharged from below the ship: it rushes through the water until it reaches its mark and then explodes.



There are some ships, which are much smaller than a battleship or a cruiser, which are called Torpedo-boats, as they are armed with torpedoes only, and carry only very small guns, if any.

On the other hand there are ships called Torpedo-boat-destroyers. These are the fastest ships afloat, and are very low in the water, so that they afford hardly any mark for enemy guns or torpedoes. They are used to patrol coasts and to guard harbours and other ships against the enemy.

### **Submarines and Mines.**

The smallest ships of all are the Submarines, which are so called because they can either sail on the water or below it. These also use torpedoes as their main weapon. They are extremely dangerous to the enemy as, when they are sailing below the surface of the water, nothing can be seen of them but the end of a tube. This tube is called a *Periscope*, and through it, by an arrangement of mirrors, the sailors in the submarine can see what is going on, on the sea above them.

Another of the appliances used in naval warfare is what are called Mines. A mine is a kind of machine floating below the surface of the sea. It is attached to an arrangement on the surface of the water which, if touched by a ship, immediately explodes the mine.

### **Branches of the Navy.**

In the Navy, as in the Army, there are various arms or branches: each ship is a complete unit in itself and has its navigating officers, its engineers, its gunners, signallers, doctors, police, and clerical establishment.

A battleship is in fact like a small self-contained town, and may carry as many as 1,000 men on board. But although each ship is an independent unit, in another sense it is a part of an organism, which, in the case of the Navy, is called a Squadron, Flotilla, or Fleet; and as an Army contains Artillery, Engineers, Cavalry, and Infantry, each doing its own particular work, so a Fleet will contain a certain number of Battleships, Cruisers, Destroyers and Submarines.

## CHAPTER III.

### **What the Mother-Country did.**

It has been said of the Englishman that he never knows when he is beaten. The history of the British Empire starts from two small islands in the North Sea, and ends with the Greatest Empire, or the Greatest Nation, of all time. What the Empire Overseas, the Dominions beyond the Seas, did in the service of Justice and Humanity will be seen later. at the present moment it is necessary to consider what the United Kingdom (England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales), actually performed.

When the war began we had an army of roughly 250,000 men ; we had a reserve of 145,000 ; and what were called " Territorial Forces," who were not regular or professional soldiers, but civilians who possessed some military training, amounting to about 300,000. This army, compared with those of Russia, Germany, or France, was very small indeed. Since, however, England had promised her aid to Belgium and to France, it was necessary to raise as many troops as possible.

#### **England's Answer.**

At first people in England showed too much confidence : they knew that their Navy was the best in

the world, and they trusted that their Army would easily be made equal to the Navy: also they did not know the power or the ingenuity of the Germans. In the early days of the war every one in England said, "Let us show that we do not mind what other people do: whether there is a war, or no war, we will carry on our business as usual." Very soon, however, it became clear that business could not go on as usual: more men were needed, more guns and more ammunition; also more food and clothes for the men. Lord Kitchener, one of the greatest soldiers that England has ever known, was appointed Secretary of State for War, and was put in supreme command of our forces: he at once called for volunteers, telling the people of England that the war would last at least three years. His summons was speedily obeyed: young men who were engaged in business or professional work threw away their chances of success and enlisted in the army: those who were too old to fight did duty as special police, their work being to guard bridges and roads, and to search for German spies, of which there were a great number. The women of England came forward with offers to serve as nurses, as factory workers, or to take the place of men as railway guards, tram-conductors, and in various other posts. The examples of self-sacrifice and self-denial were magnificent.

### **Lord Derby.**

Still, although the nation came forward with various offers of work, during the first two years of the war, there was a lamentable want of men, of arms and of various "munitions," and in the autumn of 1915, Lord

Derby, a prominent statesman and one whose family had for centuries been admired for its self-sacrifice and patriotism, attempted to raise an army sufficient for the task imposed upon it, and to collect workers of all sorts, who would fit out the armies with ammunition supplies and stores of all sorts. Lord Kitchener had promised General Joffre, who was the chief of the French armies, that he would send an army of 1,000,000 men to the help of the French, but that it would require at least a year to train these men. It became necessary, by some means or other, to raise more men, for every week our losses were appalling, and since the Russians were not able to defeat the Germans on the Eastern front it became necessary to send greater forces to the West. By May, 1916, thanks partly to the inborn patriotism of the English, and partly to the superb efforts of Lord Derby, our army had been raised by voluntary enlistment to more than five millions: this, as his Majesty King George said, was "an effort far surpassing that of any other nation in similar circumstances recorded in history, and one which will be a lasting source of pride to future generations." Voluntary enlistment was, however, not enough; and in May, 1916, a system of conscription was established: that is to say, every Englishman between the ages of 18 and 41 was considered a soldier, and unless he was doing other work for the Government and for the country, he had to join the Army. Finally, the actual number of men from the British Isles who were in the fighting forces (apart from men who were doing their duty at home, in factories, or offices, or in other employment) was as much as 5,704,000: conscription had

added three quarters of a million to our fighting forces

This was the actual army which came from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales: it does not include the forces which came from Overseas—from Australia, Canada, India and the other Dominions. It is perhaps well to consider the forces of the other Allied countries. France, which of all the Allies has the greatest population, raised 9,717,000 men; Italy raised 5,250,000, and the United States, a country which came into the war very much later than the others, 3,800,000.

### **Women's Work**

These were the numbers raised. Let us now consider how many of all these millions died. France lost 1,308,000; England 680,000, Italy 460,000; and the U.S.A. 122,000. The men of England, when the war began and as it progressed, saw their duty clearly, and did it: but England contains not only men, but women also, and the women of England, no less than the men, did their duty. They saw that there were many opportunities for useful work, and that there were posts which they could fill, if not as well as men, at least well enough, until the men could fill them. Women took the places of men as tram-conductors, as clerks, as messengers, and in many other positions; while the men, who had before been in those positions, were enabled to join the Army. Women were also employed largely in agricultural work: they ploughed, sowed, and reaped: they looked after the cattle, sheep, and horses: they cultivated gardens and raised vegetables.

### **Food-Supplies.**

A great general once said, "An army marches on its stomach"; and during the Great War the Allied Armies were always well fed. The Germans attempted by means of their submarines to prevent any food from getting to the armies, and even hoped that they would be able to starve the British Isles. Their submarine boats certainly did immense damage: during the four years of war Great Britain lost 7,000,000 tons of shipping; and if we remember that a ship of 2,000 tons can carry a cargo of 5,000 tons, it will be seen how great our loss was. The Dominions beyond the seas made the most wonderful efforts to assist us in our shortage of food. Canada, for instance, each year of the war, sent to the Mother Country no less than 2,400,000 barrels of flour; and in one year she sent 86,500,000 lbs. of beef; and Canada's example was followed by the other Dominions, each according to its ability. But with all this assistance from without, food was very scarce in England: before the war it was said that England, if left to her own resources, and without supplies from outside, would starve in three weeks; and since England had not only to feed herself, but to provide food for her armies abroad, it was necessary for her citizens to cut down their supplies of food, to eat as little as possible, and in particular to economize in sugar, meat, grains, and fats.

### **Food Control.**

A Controller of Food was established in Nov. 1916, and when Mr Lloyd George became Prime Minister, a new Department, that of Food Control, was formed. In

1917 books of "food-tickets" were issued, everybody in the land, whether man, woman, or child, was allowed to purchase a certain amount of food each week, and no more; so much bread, so much sugar, so much meat, and so forth. At the same time the prices of food were fixed, in order that dealers in food might not make an unfair profit. The result of these measures was roughly this: that each person, whether rich or poor, great or small, noble or common, educated or ignorant, was treated alike: and each person felt that by denying himself certain luxuries and by providing himself merely with what was absolutely necessary, he could help his country, that is to say, his fellow citizens, both at home and abroad, to make the world a better place to live in, better for himself and for his fellow men.

### **Munitions.**

There is another matter in which the people of the British Isles showed their determination and their efficiency. This was in the actual material of war—guns, rifles, tanks, and so forth. It will be seen later that the successful conclusion of the war was long delayed for want of munitions: that the first and second Russian offensives failed for this reason, and that we were unable to follow up the success of the battle of Neuve Chapelle because of the lack of supplies, and that, even earlier on the Western Front, our advance in Belgium was made impossible by the lack of High Explosives. On the other hand, as soon as the need for supplies and material was realised, and it was seen that guns and ammunition of all kinds were almost more important than men, the civilian population turned to the manufacture of all



sorts of munitions in a spirit which has astonished the world. Under the guidance of Mr. Lloyd George, who was made Minister of Munitions in 1915, an immense improvement was effected. Thirty-three national shell factories were established, and besides this vast quantities were turned out by private firms: indeed, the output of these private firms by the end of 1915 was already three times as great as the entire output of the whole country six months before. But this was not all. The consumption of explosives increased every month, and the output had to keep up with it. By 1918 all previous figures had been surpassed.

### **An Example.**

What was being done then can be seen from a single example. In the spring of 1918, at the time of the great German offensive, within a few weeks we had lost or spent —

1,000 guns.  
70,000 tons of ammunition.  
4,000 machine guns.  
200,000 rifles.  
700 trench mortars.  
200 tanks.

But within a fortnight all these losses had been replaced, and in many cases superior material and weapons were supplied, and in September, when the Hindenburg line was broken, in one day British guns alone fired 943,000 shells, which is more than was fired throughout the whole of the South African War, which lasted from 1899-1902.

### **Mills Bombs.**

Another example will show the extraordinary output of munitions. Our first Expeditionary force, which went to France in 1914, had only 1,500 grenades—these were intended for trench warfare. As time went on, better kinds of apparatus were discovered, and in particular, what is known as the Mills Bomb was found to be most effective. In 1918, at the time when the armistice was signed, Great Britain was every week sending over to France no less than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions of Mills bombs. As many as 80 firms were employed in manufacturing these bombs, and it is estimated that during the whole course of the war more than 90,000,000 of these bombs were manufactured.

The magnitude of these outputs shows clearly that it was not merely the fighting men of Great Britain who won the war. Our soldiers were magnificent, so magnificent that there has never been, and probably never will be, so marvellous a fighting force; but without munitions no force can fight; and the output of shells, bombs, guns, rifles and all the apparatus of war proves that the inhabitants of Great Britain, even though they were not actually fighting, did all that they could to win the war. The war was won not merely by the British armies, but by the British people.

### **An United People.**

The British Isles are a small country, but there are many people in them; and when many people unite together in a common resolve, the result is often surprising. When England or the British Isles were united in mind and fixed purpose, Germany found the

result surprising. England was her most bitter enemy, for England directly and indirectly had more than any other power caused her downfall.

Above all things else, let us British subjects remember that without our navy, nothing that the Empire did in the war would have been possible : the war was won, as all great wars have been won, by our navy ; and the words of the poet are as true to-day as when they were written—indeed they are truer .

Britannia rules the waves,  
Britons never shall be slaves.

## CHAPTER IV.

### What the Empire did.

#### *Central Powers and Allies Compared and Contrasted.*

WHEN Germany began the war, she had, as we have seen, three important adversaries · they were Russia, France, and England. She had already made up her mind as to what each of them would be able to do in case of a war. Russia she knew to possess a powerful army, amounting to, perhaps, 10,000,000 men ; but she knew that Russia would take a long time to mobilize her troops. France she despised : she thought that the French nation was corrupt, that the French army was unprepared and badly provided with all the material that is needed by an army in actual warfare. There remained England , but England, she knew (or thought she knew) was stupid and slow, and she hoped that either England would not come to the help of France, or, if she did, the amount of assistance that she would give would be negligible. She knew that Great Britain had the finest navy in the world ; she did not know that the British army was, likewise, about to become the finest in the world. She spoke about the British army as a “ contemptible ” force.

She made a great mistake.

### **The Empire.**

But if she made a great mistake about England, she made another mistake which was even greater. She forgot or misjudged the British Empire. Her own Dominions overseas were not really part of the German Empire: they had no real freedom, they had merely been exploited for the benefit of Germany, and consequently they had little or no love for her. She imagined that the British Empire was in the same case. It is interesting to take the several parts of the Empire and to compare Germany's anticipations of what would happen in 1914 and after, with what actually came to pass.

During the whole war, the British Empire raised forces of 10,700,000 men (army and navy). Our casualties were over three millions.

### *Canada.*

This great North American Dominion, known as the "Eldest Daughter" of the Empire, had for many years been self-governing and independent, although the Governor-Generals, like the Viceroy of India, had been sent out from England. Again the Canadian coinage, Canadian railways, and hotels were based upon the systems found in the United States of America. Germany, perhaps not unnaturally, thought that Canada was more nearly allied to the U.S.A. than to Britain, and that she would not give any assistance. It must have been a disagreeable surprise to her to find that in place of the little army of 3,000 men which Canada possessed at the beginning of the war,

within a few days no less than 100,000 volunteers had been raised : before the end of Sept. 1914, 33,000 men had been sent to Europe, while no less than 98 million pounds of flour were almost immediately despatched for the use of the troops fighting in Europe.

But Canada did more than this. Prominent citizens came forward with offers of money and supplies : one millionaire, at his own expense, raised and equipped an entire regiment, which was known as Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, after Princess Patricia of Connaught, the daughter of the Governor-General ; and by the middle of 1918, a force of more than 500,000 troops had been raised, 390,000 of whom had been despatched overseas.

The Canadian troops at all times fought with the greatest gallantry and heroism, and, by the truly British spirit, which they displayed at many critical moments, largely contributed to the successful termination of the war.

### *Australia.*

The Germans thought that Australia, being situated at the other end of the world to Great Britain, and having interests in many ways quite different from hers, would, one day, declare herself entirely independent ; and that, in the meanwhile, the Australians, if they did not actually dislike, did not actively love, the Mother country. Again Germany was mistaken. Australia, when war broke out, was not really prepared ; but, in the words of one of her most prominent statesmen, she was ready to support Britain with her last man and her last shilling. She at once placed all the vessels of

the Australian Navy at the disposal of the Imperial Fleet, and she prepared an expeditionary force of 20,000 men. By the end of 1917 no less than 306,000 men had been sent overseas; and it may be safely said that these troops more than lived up to their reputations. The Australian soldiers were hard, tough, strong, and determined; and it has been said that an Australian will always "get through."

### *South Africa.*

The various countries that make up United South Africa (Cape Colony, the Orange River Colony, the Transvaal, Rhodesia, and so forth) had, when war broke out, only recently been united into one whole: the population of this vast area was mixed, and the political power was largely in the hands of men of Dutch, and not British, origin. Germany imagined that the Dutch, having recently fought against England, would turn against her at a crisis. Here again she was mistaken.

The Dutch in South Africa had been defeated by the British, but they were not a conquered people: they had been well treated, and had been admitted into the British Empire as an integral part of it, and as one of the Daughter Nations. It was no surprise, therefore, to the British Empire (though it must have been a rude shock to Germany) when the generals and statesmen who had fought against England in 1900, were the first to come to the assistance of the Empire. Within a few days from the declaration of war, South Africa informed the Mother Country that she herself would take all the steps necessary for her own defence; and, consequently, 6,000 "home

troops" were released for service elsewhere. We shall see elsewhere how well South Africa managed her own concerns; but she did more than that. From the autumn of 1914 to the armistice of 1918, South African troops whether of Dutch, or African, or English descent were sent to Europe and to other fronts, and their bravery, devotion, and loyalty were beyond praise.

### *New Zealand.*

The entire population of New Zealand is a little over 1,000,000; but the first New Zealand expeditionary force, which was despatched in the early winter of 1914, consisted of as many as 8,000 men. This force was gradually supplemented by other armies, until by 1918 no less than 100,000 men had been despatched overseas. It must have been mortifying to Germany to find that a little country, whose population was less than that of Calcutta, and which was situated exactly on the opposite side of the world to Great Britain, should feel such devotion to the Mother Country that she should voluntarily and without being asked, give one out of every ten of her population. Germany was, quite possibly, surprised.

### *Newfoundland.*

This island had a population of about 242,000. On the outbreak of war she at once increased her Naval Reserve to 1,000 and raised a force of 500 men, who were despatched to Europe within a few days. This force was increased until it reached the grand total of 3,000. Germany, it is to be imagined, had forgotten Newfoundland.



*India.*

The instances given above are samples taken down from the five continents and the seven seas to show that the British Empire is really an Empire—one and united. Many more examples of the smaller dependencies and colonies could be given, for all over the world, where the Union Jack flew, British subjects rallied, without distinction of colour or creed, to assist the Empire and Humanity against the devilry of the Germans. But what was perhaps the greatest surprise to Germany, and, indeed, was a wonder to the whole world, was the behaviour of India. Germany had been watching India carefully for many years: her merchants had done business with the village bazaar keepers throughout the land: her missionaries, particularly in the extreme South, had been spreading a German form of Christianity and a German form of Civilization: in every town of any importance she had her agents. We may be certain that these agents were quick to report any disloyalty, any disaffection, any attempt to undermine the British "Raj." Further, Germany had posed for years as a Muhammedan power; and indeed the Kaiser was ready at any moment to proclaim himself the Head of Islam. German statesmen fancied that in a war with England, she could persuade the Muhammedans to undertake a sacred war against the British Empire.

If she was mistaken about the rest of the Empire, she was more than doubly mistaken about India.

She had made another mistake before—a mistake which India was not likely to forget. When a few years

before German and Indian troops had fought side by side against the Chinese, the Germans with their customary lack of manners, spoke of the Indian troops as "coolies" and "niggers." Such insults are not easily forgotten.

### **What India Did.**

India, however, not merely showed that she did not love the Germans; she showed in no uncertain way that she loved her King Emperor. Lord Sydenham, who had been Governor of Bombay, speaking of her loyalty, wrote: "Throughout the war India, as all who knew her confidently expected, has given invaluable assistance to the cause of the Empire."

Two infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade were at once despatched to the Western front, and preparations were made for an Indian Expeditionary Force to be despatched to the Persian Gulf for the protection of British trade and British interests. In the meanwhile, the Rulers and Princes of India came forward with offers of help, troops, and money. The Maharajah of Mysore offered, out of his own personal property, the magnificent sum of 50,000,00 rupees, and other generous offers of money and men came from the rulers of Jodhpur, Bikanir, Kishnagar, Ratlam, Sachin and Patiala. From no less than 27 of the Native States "Imperial Service troops" were sent. The States of Gwalior and Bhopal offered cavalry and horses. What was even more surprising was that this enthusiasm and loyalty was not confined to the Indian Kingdoms and States alone. From Nepal, which is outside India, poured innumerable voluntary offers of men: it is from this State that the Gurkhas

come, the little men of the mountains, whose fighting with the "kukri" has become world-famous, and who have always been bosom-friends with English troops. Besides these individual offers, the State offered three lakhs of rupees for arms and equipment. Perhaps even more amazing was the offer from the Dalai Lama of Thibet, who sent a contingent of 1,000 men. It must be remembered that Thibet had been for many years considered a forbidden land to Europeans, and before 1914 the Dalai Lama had not been at all well-disposed towards the British. Yet at the outbreak of the Great War the justice of Britain's cause was recognised, and Nepal unreservedly threw in her lot with the Allies.

### **The King-Emperor.**

The Germans made a grave mistake in their estimate of the Overseas Dominions; no such mistake, however, was made by our Emperor, who, in his message to the millions of his subjects beyond the seas, said, "I am proud to be able to show to the world that my peoples oversea are as determined as the people of the United Kingdom to prosecute a just cause to a successful end" British subjects overseas have justified this confidence, and, as His Majesty said, "united, calm, resolute, trusting in God," they successfully fought the battles of humanity to the one possible end, the destruction of German "Culture," and the Triumph of Justice and of Right.

## PART II

### THE ROYAL NAVY.

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#### CHAPTER V.

#### The Work of the Navy.

ENGLAND entered into the war to support her ally France, and to protect her ward Belgium. In order to accomplish her purpose, she had :

1. To send her own armies over the sea to France, or wherever else they might be wanted.
2. To collect armies from her Dominions overseas.
3. To keep these armies and her own civilian population supplied with all necessities.

That she was able to do all this and more is entirely due to her Navy.

The aim of the German navy (which, in 1914, was the second largest navy in the world), was to prevent England from assembling and maintaining these armies, and particularly to cut off all her food supplies.

Within eight days from the Declaration of War it

was obvious that Germany had failed in her purpose. She did not, however, give up her vain attempt, but, on the contrary, finding that she could not succeed by fair means, tried to achieve success by foul means, as she had on land.

The German navy was an upstart navy, and did not possess the ancient and glorious traditions of that of England, and, as was well said of it, "Some new-comers into honourable professions learn the tricks before the traditions."

### **Bullies, but Cowards.**

After the battle of Jutland (*see below*) it was evident, even to the Germans themselves, that it was quite hopeless for their fleet to fight against our own, so their fleet remained in their own harbours, and never ventured out again, and they began a miscalled "blockade" of our coasts conducted by means of submarines. Later, finding that this too did not bring about the expected result, in desperation they began an indiscriminate sinking of all ships at sea which could directly or indirectly assist the Allies. In this way hundreds of innocent neutrals and non-combatants were drowned, and it was this which finally brought America into the war. The most notorious case was that of the *Lusitania*, a passenger ship, flying the American flag, which was sunk by a German submarine on May 7th, 1915. This crime resulted in the drowning of 1,300 people, mostly women and children. The greatest successes of the German navy were obtained against such passenger vessels and hospital ships. They also made several raids on unfortified towns on the east coast of England,

killing or injuring many noncombatants, women and children

The outbreak of war found the Navy completely prepared. Its first act was to find and capture all German merchant vessels throughout the world, and, by Aug. 16th, the German mercantile marine had ceased to exist, and every sea, except the Baltic and the Black Sea, was closed to German trade.

There were very few ships of the German Navy away from their own waters. Two of these, the Goeben and the Breslau, were in the Mediterranean, and in order to avoid the British and French navies fled as fast as they could to Constantinople, in which, since it was then a neutral port, they were safe from attack. Their subsequent history, as also that of a few German vessels in the Black Sea, had practically no further effect on the course of the war.

### **The German Pacific Squadron.**

The other seven German ships at large were all accounted for. When war was declared, they were in the German port of Kiao-Chao, in the Shantung province of China. They consisted of the Gneisenau, Scharnhorst, Dresden, Leipzig, Nurnberg, Königsberg and Emden. This, the so-called German Pacific Squadron, did not attempt to protect the German colonies in the Pacific, which were rapidly annexed by our Australian and China Squadrons; but two of the ships, the Emden and the Königsberg, small cruisers, betook themselves to the Indian Ocean, while the rest sailed for the western shores of South America, hoping to destroy British commerce there. The Emden and the Königsberg had

a short life but a merry one. The latter succeeded in destroying an English man-of-war off Zanzibar, but was herself destroyed on Nov. 10th. The Emden, commanded by Captain von Müller, appeared in the Bay of Bengal on Sept. 10th, and there destroyed six merchantmen. She then appeared off Madras, which she bombarded, and then cruised in the Arabian Sea and off the coast of Malabar, destroying merchant vessels, and taking much booty. Thence she went South-East to Sumatra, and on Oct. 30th, sunk a Russian cruiser and a French destroyer in Penang roads. On Nov. 9th, she appeared at the Cocos or Keeling Islands with the intention of destroying the wireless station; but the operators had just time to send off a message, which was picked up by the cruiser Sydney of the Australian Navy. After a short fight the Emden was sunk by the Sydney, the captain of which gave back Captain von Müller his sword, for von Müller, although he had done damage to the extent of £200,000, had treated the crews of his captives with generosity, and no act of brutality was ever charged against him. His mother was English and he had been educated in England.

### Coronel.

The rest of the Pacific Squadron, the Gneisenau, under Admiral von Spee, Scharnhorst, Dresden, Leipzig, and Nürnberg for several weeks obtained supplies from certain South American republics, whose neutrality was hardly as strict as they pretended, and late in October fell in with a small British squadron commanded by Sir Christopher Cradock and consisting of the Canopus, Good Hope, Monmouth, Glasgow and Otranto.

Admiral Cradock, in spite of desperately unfortunate odds (for the Canopus had been forced to put into harbour for repairs and his other ships were of an old type) gave battle on Nov. 1st, off Coronel in Chile, but his squadron was forced to flee and he himself perished with his flag-ship, the Good Hope.

### **The Falkland Islands.**

The Germans were not destined, however, to triumph for long. Early in December there arrived off the Falkland Isles a powerful squadron under Sir Doveton Sturdee: his ships were the Invincible, Inflexible, battle-cruisers with a speed of 25 knots and armed with 12 inch guns, the light cruisers Carnarvon, Kent, Cornwall and Bristol, the cruiser Macedonia (which before the war had been a passenger ship), and the Glasgow, which joined them in the South Atlantic. By means of a ruse they enticed the Germans towards the Falkland Islands, and on Dec. 8th, 1914, a battle was fought, in which the Germans lost the Gneisenau, Scharnhorst, Nürnberg, and Leipzig. The Dresden escaped, but was sunk in March 1915.

The Battle of the Falkland Islands was a brilliant piece of strategy, for the Germans were led into a trap and the entire plan had been kept secret for several weeks. Admiral von Spee and his men fought bravely, as Cradock and his sailors had fought at Coronel, but like Cradock he was outnumbered.

### **In Home Waters.**

Meanwhile in home waters important events had taken place. On Aug. 28th, one of the most magnificent of all



our victories at sea took place off the German island-fortress of Heligoland. On that day a considerable force, consisting of sixteen greater ships, and a large number of smaller vessels, destroyers, and submarines, commanded by Sir David Beatty, which was patrolling the German coast in search of enemy vessels, met a large German force of cruisers and destroyers. The combined forces amounted to about sixty ships. The Germans fought bravely, but as regards strategy and boldness they were outclassed: they lost two new cruisers, and one of older design, and one destroyer, while one cruiser and seven destroyers were badly damaged. Our losses in ships were *nil*, and indeed the damage done was very slight: we lost thirty-two men killed and fifty-two wounded. The Germans lost at least 700 killed, while 300 were taken prisoner. The battle proved clearly the use of battle-cruisers and light cruisers, one of which, the *Arethusa*, did the most wonderful work, and also the value of speed. Its immediate consequence was that the German Navy gave up, at least for several months, any idea of a battle in the open sea, and began to trust, more and more, upon its submarines and upon mines.

### **Submarines.**

That submarines are a source of the greatest peril appears hardly to have been realised in the earlier months of the war, for on Sept. 22nd, three of our cruisers, the *Aboukir*, *Hogue*, and *Cressy* were sunk off the Dutch Coast. The catastrophe would probably have been prevented had these ships been protected, as later on our men-of-war were, by a "screen" of

destroyers. The incident was rendered more disastrous by the fact that the Hogue and Aboukir were sunk in efforts to save the lives of their comrades on the Cressy, the first ship sunk. When British ships sink German ships, they always attempt to save the crews : the Germans never. Of a total of 1,500 men only half were saved.

### **The Dogger Bank.**

After the battle of the Bight of Heligoland, little occurred except minor actions until the Battle of the Dogger Bank on Jan. 24th, 1915, when Admiral Beatty with the battle-cruisers Lion, Tiger, Princess Royal, New Zealand, Indomitable, and seven other cruisers, together with several destroyers, encountered the German ships Seidlitz, Moltke, Derfflinger, and Blücher, with some light cruisers and destroyers. The battle was conducted at a distance of from ten to fourteen miles and the ships on either side were travelling at a rate of about 25 knots. The Seidlitz and the Derfflinger were badly damaged, the German casualties being very high, and the Blücher was sunk. It is probable that some other German ships also were lost during their return to their bases, but this question cannot yet be decided, for the only information obtainable comes from our side, and the British Navy never makes a statement about enemy losses unless its information is exact and conclusive. Our losses in ships, as in the Heligoland battle, were nil : in men we lost perhaps thirty.

### **Jutland.**

After this disaster, the German Fleet was more than ever determined to stay at home, and apart from the

increasing activity of the submarines and some minor engagements off the Belgian Coast and off Jutland, nothing worthy of record occurred until May 31st, 1916. On that day the German High Seas Fleet, comprising almost all the "capital" ships of the Navy, and commanded by Admirals von Hipper and von Scheer, put out to sea. What the object of the expedition may have been, is not known; but whatever it was it was not achieved, for about 100 miles from the coast of Jutland the Germans were met by Sir David Beatty with a squadron of battle-cruisers and cruisers. The battle that ensued was one of the most important and decisive in Naval History. Sir David Beatty was in touch with Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, who was the commander-in-chief of the British Navy, and was at the time cruising with the North Seas Grand Fleet of battleships about 70 miles to the North and who, it was arranged, was to meet the cruiser squadron later in the day. He met the German Fleet at about 3.30 in the afternoon and, although outnumbered, promptly engaged it, attempting to decoy the Germans to the North towards the British Grand Fleet. In this earlier part of the engagement we lost three of our battle-cruisers, the Queen Mary, the Invincible and the Indefatigable, of the German ships one cruiser was observed to be on fire, another fell out of line in a damaged condition, and probably sank, while at least two others appeared to be seriously damaged.

The two fleets met Sir John Jellicoe at about 6; the Germans, who were now outnumbered, fled to the South and for the next two hours a running fight was waged. The weather was now becoming very misty

and the light began to fail ; and by 9 o'clock the Germans had entirely disappeared. Our ships searched for them all night and until 11 the next morning, but nothing was to be found.

The chief result of the battle was that the German Navy never dared again to come out ; but what the losses on either side were is hard to determine. We published our losses, which consisted of 14 ships (6 cruisers and 8 T.B.D.s) of a tonnage of 113,000 tons. The Germans published no list of casualties and were vague in their statements : it is calculated (Feb. 1919) that they lost at least 16 ships (3 battleships, one battle-cruiser, five light cruisers, 6 T.B.D.s and 1 submarine) of an estimated tonnage of 119,000 tons, but it is quite probable that several other vessels were so damaged as to be unfit for further service, or else sunk on their way back to harbour.

### **The Submarine Menace.**

From this point until the end the German Fleet stayed at home : on Aug. 19th, they ventured out a few miles, but sighted a British squadron and retired in a hurry. Thereafter they confined themselves to raids with destroyers and submarines, their chief successes being against passenger vessels and hospital ships. In Nov. 1916 the submarines began to be a considerable menace, not only to the Allies, but to the whole world : by that time they had built bigger boats, boats that could travel 12,000 miles without taking in stores, and carried guns with a range of 6,000 yards ; and they set themselves to destroy any vessel that they saw.

### Changes of Command.

At the end of 1916 some changes were made in the Navy—Sir J. Jellicoe was made First Lord of the Admiralty, that is to say, he directed the movements of our whole Navy from on shore, and Sir D. Beatty was appointed to the command of the Grand Fleet. At the same time an attempt was made to thwart Germany's "submarine campaign" by laying explosive mines around the German harbours. Several thousands of these mines were laid off the coast of Germany, until by 1918 the number of German submarines that came out of German harbours was almost negligible.

### Zeebrugge.

There remained, however, the two important bases of Zeebrugge and Ostend in Belgium. In 1915 we had attempted to bombard these fortresses, but as is always the case guns fired from ships are useless against guns mounted on land, and the two ports continued to send out their submarines. Finally, however, in 1918 a most daring attack was planned and on April 23rd, simultaneous attacks were made on both places. Certain old vessels were filled with concrete, and it was planned to sink these vessels in the harbour at Ostend and at the mouth of the Bruges Canal at Zeebrugge. The attacks were to be made at night and under cover of a "smoke-screen," while at Zeebrugge an attack was also to be made on the Mole and Pier. The attack on Zeebrugge, made under the direction of Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, was a complete success. The cruiser *Vindictive* (Capt. Carpenter) attacked the Mole and landed 300-400 sailors and marines: this attack diverted the attention

of the Germans from the real purpose of the expedition, and while the enemy was engaged with the landing-party, a submarine blew up the Mole near the mainland. and the three old ships Thetis, Iphigenia, and Intrepid, were run ashore and sunk in the mouth of the Canal. The expeditionary force returned home having accomplished a most heroic and highly successful enterprise and having suffered astoundingly little damage to men or ships.

### **Ostend.**

At Ostend the attack, under Commodore Hubert Lynes, was less successful, for the weather was bad and the blocking ships were sunk outside the harbour; but on May 9th a second surprise attack was made and the Vindictive, this time commanded by Commander Godsall, was successfully sunk in the harbour. From that time forth until the end of the war these two ports were "put out of action."

### **Richborough.**

There are two other matters in which the British Navy was of the greatest help to the Allies. They are absolutely distinct from each other, but each of them is entirely original. The first was the construction of a depôt and a "ferry service" between England and France. When, under Mr. Lloyd George's guidance, England began to manufacture guns, shells, and tanks (to mention only a few of the more important kinds of apparatus) in extraordinary numbers, it became necessary to discover some new means of conveying this heavy material to France. The shortest way from

England to the Continent is from Dover to Calais, where the distance is about 21 miles ; but Dover was a place well-known to the Germans, and because of the nature of the country, which is very hilly, it was not a convenient place where large pieces of apparatus, such as tanks, or heavy guns, could be stored until they could be put on board ships. Another place was therefore decided upon, namely Richborough, which is a place which had once been a Roman port (when England was a Roman Province), and where the country is flat, so that it is not so difficult to transfer cargo from a train to a ship. Richborough was therefore chosen as a convenient depôt and port from which heavy guns and tanks and ammunition could be sent over to France. However, even when the place had been selected the actual means of transport had to be devised, and finally, instead of taking the heavy guns and so forth off the railway trucks and putting them on to ships, it was arranged to build ships which would take the actual railway trucks with the guns on board. On the decks of these ships there were rails, and the trucks, with the guns on them, were shunted on to the boats just as they might be on to a siding in an ordinary railway-station. They were then taken over to a port in France—the trucks were shunted on to the railway lines, and they were taken away, quickly and conveniently, to any point “somewhere in France”—where they were needed.

To have planned such a scheme was wonderful ; but it is still more wonderful that, until the War was over, the very existence of Richborough was not known : it was not known to Germany, it was not even known in England. And perhaps even more wonderful was, that

for two years these ferry boats were working every day and all day, and yet not only was no boat ever lost, but not a single gun or a single tank was damaged. This success is entirely due to our Navy and our Air Force. Our Navy kept off the German submarines, destroyers, and cruisers; while our Airmen kept off the German aeroplanes, and destroyed the "eyes" of the German fighting forces.

### **Mystery Ships.**

This was a great achievement; but another achievement, no less worthy of note, was the invention of the "Q" boats, or, as they were called popularly, "The Mystery Ships."

Early in 1917 the Germans announced that they proposed to destroy all merchant ships which they found at sea. As they had not been able to beat the Allies on land, and as the great obstacle in their way was England, they determined to starve England into submission, by cutting off all their sources of supplies. They therefore systematically sank every boat which they thought might be carrying food or materials to England. This they did by means of their submarines.

How to oppose this new peril, was a difficult matter: for the Ocean is great, but submarines are small. Destroyers were sent out in great numbers, but in the vast expanse of the sea it was difficult to find these small boats: there remained one thing only to be done. In 1917 the Admiralty, which is the office in London which controls the Navy, decided to adopt a new plan.



## Decoys.

In India, if a hunter wishes to catch a tiger, he sets a "decoy"—that is to say, he ties up a goat or a bullock which will entice the tiger, while he himself, in security at the top of a tree, in a *machân*, waits until the tiger attacks the "kill" and then takes the opportunity and shoots him. It was so with the "Q" boats—but in this case the tied-up animal and the shikari were the same.

Certain ships were sent out into those parts of the Ocean where German submarines were to be expected: these ships were, to the outward view, ordinary merchant ships, some steam ships, some sailing ships, some big, and some small: ordinarily such ships would carry a crew of, perhaps, 20 or 30 men, and would be unarmed. In reality they carried guns, some of them very large guns, and had crews of 50 or 60 men. They went to sea, however, disguised as ordinary merchantmen, for it was known that such harmless ships were exactly those which the Germans sought to destroy. They went out to "decoy" the German submarines.

## "Q" Boat Methods.

What usually happened was somewhat as follows: the Commander of the German submarine, seeing an ordinary merchant vessel, carrying coal, or corn, or timber, at once determined to attack her, and as soon as he got near enough, fired a torpedo at her. If the torpedo hit the ship, at once a crowd of people hastened on deck, collected some clothes and food and small articles, and got into boats, as if the ship were sinking (which she very often really was doing),—then the submarine would come nearer to the boats and to the ship, and

would begin to fire upon the boats and the people in them, for the Germans loved nothing so much as to hurt the innocent. But when the German ships got near enough to the boats, and therefore to the ship, suddenly there was a surprise in store for them: the sides of the ship seemed to come down like a box when it opens, and guns appeared, and then, if the submarine could get down under water in time, it escaped: but if not, she was destroyed.

This particular manœuvre was peculiarly successful; for not only were many submarines sunk by it, but submarine commanders began to be very careful when they attacked what seemed to be a merchant vessel, for fear that she might prove to be a "Q" boat; and while many apparently innocent boats were attacked, which proved to be armed, on the other hand many really innocent boats were spared because the Germans were uncertain whether they were really what they seemed. It goes without saying that the officer who commanded, and the sailors who manned these "Q" boats, were the bravest of the brave: they had to be prepared to meet almost certain death, and to sacrifice their lives in order that their fellows might damage their country's enemies: they had to be actors, pretending to be what they were not, in order that their friends might prove what they really were. Yet, great though the risk was, there was no branch of the Navy for which there were so many volunteers—for all service on "Q" boats was voluntary—the British Navy, in fact, as Stevenson said of the English Admirals, sought danger because they loved danger, and "courted War like a mistress."

## PART III.

### THE WESTERN FRONT.

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#### CHAPTER VI.

#### The First Month.

##### *Mons and the Marne.*

IF Germany was to be successful against both France and Russia it was necessary for her to move with the utmost rapidity. If she could at once successfully invade France and attack the French before they were prepared, she could then deal with Russia at her leisure, for it was certain that the Russian armies would take a long time in mobilizing in anything like large numbers. She made her arrangements thus :—

- (1) On the Belgian frontier near Aix-la-Chapelle were two large armies, under Generals von Kluck and von Bülow.
- (2) Further South were the Third and Fourth armies, the Third being Saxons, and the Fourth commanded by the Duke of Wurtemberg.

- (3) The German Crown Prince was marching on the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg.
- (4) The Sixth army, under the Crown Prince of Bavaria, was at Metz.

### **Liège and Namur.**

On Aug. 3rd von Kluck crossed the Belgian frontier at Visé and marched on Liège, the great manufacturing city of Eastern Belgium. Liège was a very strongly fortified city, its defences consisting of a ring of twelve forts, six large and six smaller. So strong were these forts that it was thought that the city was impregnable. The forts resisted the German Light Artillery successfully, but then the invaders brought up 11-inch Howitzers, which battered the forts to pieces, one by one, and Liège surrendered on Aug. 7th.

Meanwhile the Belgian Government had determined to defend Brussels and the Seat of Government was moved to Antwerp; while General Michel prepared to defend the fortress of Namur. He expected to be helped by the French, but he was taken by surprise, and the French did not arrive in time.

### **Frightfulness.**

Namur fell on Aug. 23rd. During this time, however, much of importance had happened. German troops, first Cavalry and then Infantry, overran Belgium, and first began to show that "Frightfulness" which has made the name of German infamous for all time. It is not necessary to give a list of the various atrocities committed by them, many of which are unspeakable and almost unthinkable.

War is at any time a horrible affair, and men in the excitement of fighting are apt to be seized with a sort of frenzy and to behave in a manner which would be disgraceful in times of Peace. But the Germans did more than this. Orders were given for massacres, and tortures of officers, and the orders were carried out in cold blood. But even in his brutalities the Hun was stupid: he tried to inspire his enemies with terror, thinking that they would submit to him; but he only succeeded in inspiring courage and a determination to resist to the last, however devilish his cruelties. Belgium, led by her grand King, Albert, resisted Germany and her resistance put heart into the men and women of the Allied Countries; and while Belgium was shedding her life-blood in an attempt to stop the Kaiser's soldiers, France and England had time to prepare their armies to meet them.

### **The British.**

On Aug. 14th the British Forces arrived on the Western Front. They consisted of two Army Corps (or about 80,000 men) commanded by Generals Haig and Smith Dorrien, while the whole force was under the supreme command of Sir John French (afterwards made Lord French). By agreement between Sir John French and General Joffre, who commanded the French armies, it was arranged that the English should take up a position between Lille and the North Bank of the Sambre, with the French forces on their right. This force took up its position between the town of Mons and the fortress of Maubeuge.

On Aug. 17th the Germans made a determined attack

upon these combined armies, attempting to divide them. The Belgians were forced to retire towards the cities of Louvain and Namur and moved the Headquarters of Government from Brussels to Antwerp; and indeed Brussels itself was occupied by the Germans on Aug. 20th.

### **Mons.**

Aug. 23rd was a most important date for each of the three Allied armies. The Belgian fortress of Namur was demolished by the immense German guns that were brought up against it: the French were defeated at Charleroi and forced to retire across their frontier, leaving Maubeuge in a most dangerous position; while the English were forced to retire from Mons. This last engagement was one of the most important battles of the war, and proved to the Kaiser that he was mistaken in thinking the British army a "contemptible" one. Although outnumbered by the Germans, and without assistance from the French, our troops retreated in perfect order, contesting every inch of the abandoned territory and inflicting terrible losses on the Germans. They first retreated to a line running between Cambria, Le Cateau, and Landrecies, at all of which places the most desperate fighting took place: then later to a line from St. Quentin to La Fère.<sup>1</sup> Our Engineers blew up the bridges on every river, canal and water-course, as they retreated, in order to hinder the German advance.

### **The Marne.**

In the meanwhile General Joffre had, with no less skill than General French, withdrawn his troops in a

<sup>1</sup> Later still to La Fère Laon-Rheims.

south-west direction, for the defence of Paris, and had managed to preserve the connection between his troops and the English ; and he now took up a position on the River Aisne. He was forced to take this step because the French Army fighting in the Belgian Ardennes had failed in an attack against the second German force. On Aug. 29th Generals Joffre and French met and decided that a further retreat was necessary and that the line of the Somme and the Aisne had to be abandoned, and that the Allied Armies should make a final stand on the River Marne ; this they reached on Sept 3rd. On this river was fought what was probably the decisive battle of the War, the First Battle of the Marne, which began on Sept. 5th.

### **A Wonderful Retreat.**

The retreat from Mons was remarkable because it was what is called a "strategic retirement" : it was not forced upon the Allies as the result of a defeat, but chosen because of strategic necessity. The necessity was to fight a stretch of country where the natural features, such as rivers or hills, could be used to advantage and the German superiority in numbers would not count for so much ; and also to get in complete touch with the French, so as to operate with them to the best advantage. To carry out the retreat in such a way that the retreating army can at the right moment turn and attack the pursuer, requires the highest strategy on the part of the commanders, and the highest physical hardihood and braveness on the part of the men. That the retreat from Mons was so successful and that the battle of the Marne was a possibility, proves what a wonderful force the "Old Contemptibles" were.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Marne and Onwards.

#### *The Battles of the Marne and of the Aisne.*

ON Sept. 3rd, 1914, it was decided that the Allies should take up their final position on the River Marne, and the British forces crossed the river, blowing up the bridges behind them. On Sept. 5th the city of Rheims was taken by the Germans, and two days later the first battle of the Marne began. It lasted, roughly, from the 6th to the 10th, and was one of the most important battles of the War, since by it the Germans were prevented from reaching Paris and overrunning France. On account of its importance it requires to be studied in some detail.

(1) The most important movement in the battle was on the French right (the German left) where General Foch, with the French Ninth Army, suddenly and unexpectedly, by a most brilliant piece of strategy, drove a wedge between the German armies, commanded by von Hausen and von Bülow.

(2) As an immediate result of this bold strategy, the German commander was forced into a manoeuvre which



is often attended with failure, but which in his case was necessary. He ordered the German right, which hitherto had been moving towards the south-west, to change its direction and advance towards the south and south-east. This change of plan was, no doubt, necessitated by Foch's attack, and the need for strengthening the position of the line which was threatened. It was probably thought, too, that the British troops, after their long and difficult retreat, were either out of action or were not capable of offensive action. This German manoeuvre exposed the German right flank, and the enemy experienced a rather painful surprise, for the British troops, still unbeaten, and ready for anything, immediately advanced, and they were supported by the Sixth French Army under General Manoury, the existence of which was not suspected in that particular district.

(3) In the centre, the Fifth French Army, under General D'Esperey, immediately pushed forward, and, fighting with great gallantry, drove the Germans in disorder.

The result of these three distinct sets of operations was that the Germans were forced back, with great losses of men and guns, to the line of the River Aisne : indeed, their retreat almost became a rout, and they were barely able to entrench themselves on the new line. The Allies' success was due to the fact that their strategy, especially that of General Foch, was superior to that of the Germans, while the blunders that the Germans committed at this period changed the whole aspect of their so-far successful operations.

### **Fighting Elsewhere.**

Meanwhile there had been considerable activity elsewhere. On the extreme French right, the Germans, and in particular the Bavarian troops, made a desperate attempt to capture the city of Nancy. The French were forced to retreat, but managed to save the city into which the Kaiser had planned a triumphant entry; and on Sept. 9th they occupied St. Oie, and later, on Sept. 12th, the important city of Lunéville, which the Germans had held since Aug. 22nd. At the other end of the line, in Belgium, the Germans advanced steadily, and in the fighting between Aug. 24th and the first week of September they overran nearly all Belgium. The Belgian troops resisted them desperately, and in a gallant counter-attack retook Malines and almost reached Brussels; but by the second week of September all of Belgium except Antwerp, Ostend, and part of Western Flanders, was in German hands.

### **The Aisne.**

After the first battle of the Marne the Germans fell back to a line on the Aisne, and the French recaptured the cities of Rheims, Châlons, and Soissons. The line now occupied by the Germans had been previously prepared, and really consisted of one vast fortress more than a hundred miles long. That it had already been so prepared was not known at the time, and therefore an attempt was made to drive back the Germans by a direct frontal attack instead of turning either their right or their left flank. The Germans retreated, but they were not routed: they were withdrawing to a new line of defence, for their immediate object was not

to gain fresh territory, except on the coast, at Ostend and Calais.

The battle of the Aisne, properly so-called, lasted about fourteen days : it began on Sept. 12th, and after the 18th had very nearly settled down into Trench Warfare. Until that time the Allies made a steady and continued advance, nearly all the fighting being of the hand-to-hand type. On Sept. 13th we had crossed the line of the Aisne, and on the same day the French entered the city of Amiens. From the 18th both sides started to "dig themselves in," until, after about five weeks, when the events in Flanders about to be described had taken place, there were two lines of trenches facing one another, all the way from the sea to Switzerland. During these next few weeks the rain was almost incessant, and the condition of the soldiers was most miserable.

### *The Fighting in Flanders.*

In the meanwhile the position of the most important fighting shifted from the centre to the extreme left. The Germans moved masses of troops to their right in order to get command of the Channel ports and ultimately the Straits of Dover. The Allies' aim now was to keep the command of the Coast, and, if possible, to outflank the German right. With this intention two new French armies were moved to the north of the extreme Allied left, and the British troops were also withdrawn and rapidly transferred to meet the German rush in the north.

On October 9th the Belgians were forced to abandon

Antwerp, and the Belgian army (or what was left of it) joined the Allies. The British troops were between the towns of La Bassée and Bixschoote: on their left were the Belgians, and on their right the Tenth French Army. The Germans now concentrated all their efforts on this part of the line. They had, a few days before, commenced an attack upon the outskirts of Verdun, where the Crown Prince was in command, but even this was temporarily abandoned; and apart from these northern operations, the only points of the line where anything of importance occurred were on the Aisne, where von Kluck was in command, and near Verdun.

The Allied forces opposing the Germans in Flanders, excluding the Belgians, were —

- (1) The Eighth French Army under General D'Urbal.
- (2) The Tenth Army under General Maud'huy.
- (3) The two British armies under General French.

The fighting in Flanders this Autumn falls naturally into three phases:

- (1) Up to October 20th.
- (2) The German attacks on the River Yser, La Bassée, and Arras.
- (3) The First Battle of Ypres.

(1) The fighting in this first phase was exceedingly complicated, and to be properly understood would have to be studied in greater detail than it is possible to give here. It was originally intended that the Allies should hold a line running from Antwerp along the River Scheldt to Tournai, and thence through Douai to Arras. This line could not be held because of the fall of Antwerp

in early October. When the Belgian army joined the Allied forces, they and the Allied left fell back on the line of the River Yser, through Dixmude, Ypres, and Lille. On September 30th the French occupied Arras, which was to be a pivot on which the line should turn. On October 13th, however, the Germans took Lille, which was bravely defended by French Territorials, and which was, perhaps, the most important railway centre in France. In consequence our troops had to fall back on the town of Armentières, and the line now ran more or less north and south from Nieuport through Lens, Arras, and Albert to Noyon, on the Oise, where it turned towards the east.

(2) The second phase of the fighting began on Oct. 18th. The aim of the Germans was to drive the Allies from the coast and eventually to take Calais. Had they succeeded, the Allies' position would have been most perilous, for the English would no longer have had control over the Straits of Dover, and troops could not have been sent across to the northern parts of France. To prevent the German advance the British Navy attacked the Germans from the sea, and bombarded them by means of battleships and monitors, which are flat broad boats, like great barges, very low in the water, and carrying very large guns. At the same time the Belgians opened the sluices of their canals and flooded parts of the country, which is below sea-level, between Nieuport and Dixmude. These two operations saved Calais and the coast. Between the end of October and the middle of November the Germans repeatedly attacked La Bassée, but without success; and between Oct. 20th and 26th made a violent attack on Arras,

which was completely repulsed. This fighting round Arras was of the highest importance because of the large number of roads and railways which meet there. Had Arras fallen it is probable that the whole of the Allied force in the north would have been forced to fall back.

### **Indian Troops.**

It was during these operations that the Indian troops first appeared on the Western Front. The first troops, under Sir James Willcocks, arrived in Flanders on Oct. 19th and saw their first actual fighting on the 27th, when they recaptured the village of Neuve Chapelle. The Indian troops that took part in this action were the 47th Sikhs, the 9th Bhopal Infantry, and the 1st Sappers and Miners. Another exploit of which the Indian army may be proud was the charge on Nov. 2nd of the 2nd Gurkhas, the famous regiment which fought on the ridge at Delhi in 1857.

(3) *The First Battle of Ypres.* The Germans attacked Ypres on Oct. 21st and continued to attack it until Nov. 17th. It is probable that the Germans had at least 1,000,000 men: the French may have had as many as 250,000, while our forces were never more than 150,000. In spite, however, of these overwhelming numbers the Allies gained a decisive victory and Ypres was saved, and with it the coast. It is calculated that at least 250,000 Germans fell, whereas the Allied losses were not more than 100,000. The battle was won by the skill of Sir John French and of the commander of the 1st British Corps, Sir Douglas Haig, and of Generals Rawlinson, Allenby, and Byng; and also to the extraordinary

bravery of the officers and men of all ranks. Sir John French writing of the battle, said, "I have made many calls upon you, and the answers you have made to them have covered you, your regiments, and the army to which you belong, with honour and glory." Undoubtedly the battle of Ypres was one of the most brilliant and glorious victories ever won by the British Army.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### After Ypres.

#### *Neuve Chapelle and the Second Battle of Ypres.*

THE end of the first battle of Ypres marked the passing of a crisis. The German attack had been definitely stopped, the Channel coast was saved, Paris was out of danger. By this time the Winter had set in, and minor operations alone were possible. All along the Western front the front trenches on either side faced one another, sometimes at a distance of less than 100 yards. "Trench Warfare" set in; that is to say, at intervals there were artillery duels and small local raids, but for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  months there were no considerable gains or losses on either side. There is only one outstanding incident to be noted, namely, the winning of the V.C. by an Indian. This was the first V.C. to be obtained by a native of India, and it was gained by Naik Darwan Singh Negi, who, although wounded in the arm and head, displayed great bravery in a counter-attack at the end of November.

#### **Trench Fighting.**

Until March 1915, then, trench fighting continued with no palpable successes for either side. On the one



hand, the German offensive had been checked, if not broken : on the other, the Allies were not strong enough, nor sufficiently prepared, for a general attack. More men were needed, and much more heavy artillery. The only part of the line where there was anything more than local fighting was at Soissons. Here, between Jan. 8th and 15th, a violent attack was made by the French : this attack was unsuccessful and was followed by a retreat, after which the Germans, under von Kluck, attempted to take Soissons. The result was that the French gained a little territory at the cost of a large number of lives. Meanwhile in the Champagne there had been heavy fighting, but without any decisive result.

By March 1915, then, there was little or no change except that the British now had many more men. Troops had been pouring into England from overseas, and after a few weeks' preliminary training had been despatched to the front : at home new battalions had been raised and trained, so that by March the British Expeditionary Force amounted to about half a million. These included the Canadian contingent under Major General Alderson, which arrived in February.

### **The " New Warfare."**

In March what may be called the " New Warfare " began. This meant absolute co-ordination of every branch of the service and also perfect work on the part of the Staff. For success in trench warfare it was necessary that any part of the line should be able quickly to communicate, either by telephone, or signals, or aeroplane, with other parts of the line and with

headquarters, also that every movement had to be worked out and planned down to the smallest details, and a particular moment was fixed when each operation should take place. The whole attacking force was in fact one gigantic machine, and every part of the machine had to do its particular work, at a particular time, if the machine were to work at all.

The process in an attack was usually as follows :—

(1) First, the heavy artillery bombarded the enemy's front line trenches, wire entanglements, etc.

(2) Heavy artillery bombarded enemy artillery positions—known as "Counter Battery Fire."

(3) Next, the artillery put what is called a "barrage of fire" between the enemy's front-line and his supports; that is to say, a continuous shower of shells was maintained over the whole area of enemy communication, so that nothing could live there, or pass across it

(3) Next, at a given moment, known as Zero hour, the infantry left their own trenches, crossed the vacant space between them and the enemy's trenches (this space is known as "No man's Land"), passed on through the enemy's first line, overcoming any enemy resistance met with, and occupied the second, or, it may be, the third line of trenches. Having reached these trenches, they established themselves in them, and prepared to hold them just as they had held their own trenches which they had just left. This first wave of infantry was usually followed shortly after by a second, whose duty it was to search the first line of trenches for any Germans who might have been left alive after the artillery fire, and either kill them or drive them out of their hiding places, and take them prisoner.

The system of fighting was not entirely the same in all commands, but varied for various conditions and had to be continually changing to meet the methods adopted by the enemy for defence or attack

Now for this style of fighting to be possible, three things were absolutely necessary.

(1) Our Artillery had to be sufficiently superior to be able to "silence" the German big guns, and also be able to throw over enough projectiles to demolish the trenches, entanglements, and defensive positions

(2) Every movement had to be carried out at exactly the right moment, neither too soon, nor too late. The artillery bombardment had to begin at a fixed time and cease at a fixed time. The curtain of fire had to last for an exact number of minutes. The first infantry advance had to be at a particular minute.

(3) The attack had to be followed up. When the enemy trenches had been occupied, it was necessary to hold them. This had to be done by the Infantry and Engineers, who immediately placed themselves in a state of defence in case of an infantry counter-attack by the enemy. The Artillery would not fire on their own trenches during a battle till the trenches were known to be definitely lost to them.

### **Neuve Chapelle.**

The first experiment at this new warfare was made on March 10th and the following days at the battle of Neuve Chapelle (*see map*). At exactly 7.30 on the morning of March 10th the British heavy artillery commenced to demolish the German trenches. Our guns were more numerous, more powerful, and better

manned than the Germans: indeed until that date there had never been so powerful an artillery attack in the History of Man. This artillery fire continued until 8.5 a.m., by which time the German trenches were battered out of recognition. By 8.35 a.m. the range of the big guns was lengthened—that is to say, their fire was directed to a more advanced area—in order that the German supports and communications might be cut off. A few minutes later the infantry advanced.

So far, two of the conditions had been fulfilled: the artillery was superior, and every move was carried out correctly at the exact moment. The third condition, however, remained unfulfilled—the attack was not followed up. The artillery fire had cut all the telephonic communications, both our own and the Germans', and it was impossible for the officers in the front lines to communicate with their headquarters. This state of affairs went on for two whole days after March the 10th, until by the evening of the 12th it became quite clear that no further advance was possible, and that it might even be necessary for our men to retreat.

Meanwhile the Germans had been making similar plans for a counter-attack, and on the morning of the 14th they proceeded to do to us exactly what we had done to them on the 10th. Our forces retreated, but the next day ourselves made a counter-attack, and by the evening of the 15th we were back again in the German trenches.

Neuve Chapelle was neither a disaster nor a victory. It was not a victory, because it produced no effect on the general situation and it cost us many valuable lives, whereas had it been successful, our troops could

have broken the German lines and advanced to Lille. It was not a failure, because it proved what could be done by the "New Warfare," if only sufficient superiority in artillery could be obtained; and also our operations, though not successful, had been carried out so well that our casualties were very much less than those of the Germans. It is calculated that our losses in killed and wounded were about 13,000, whereas the Germans lost at least 20,000. Our regiments which suffered most were the Grenadier Guards, the Middlesex, Northants, and Worcester Regiments, the Scottish Rifles, the Sherwood Foresters, and the 39th Garhwalis.

Sir John French's despatch was brought to England by H R H. the Prince of Wales.

### **Second Ypres.**

The next battle to be noted is the second battle of Ypres, which lasted from April 22nd to May 13th, 1915, and resulted in a bloody defeat for the Germans. The first battle of Ypres had been for the possession of the coast: the second was a similar attempt. The German concentration of artillery was enormous and for the first time they made use of "gas;" but in spite of this deadly demoralising weapon of war they were unable to win, because individually the British soldier was far superior to the German, braver, more patient, and physically stronger.

The battle began thus. About April 17th our troops had advanced until they formed what is called a salient, that is to say, they had driven back the Germans until they formed a dent, or an angle in their lines: this angle was about six miles across at the broadest part, with

the city of Ypres lying halfway between the two arms. The Allied troops were arranged thus—first French troops, then Canadian, and then English.

### **German Counter-Attacks.**

The Germans attempted by a counter-attack to drive the Allied troops from their advanced positions, and hoped also that they might, subsequently, be able to capture Ypres itself. They therefore began by bombarding the city on the 20th April, using 42 cm. shells for this purpose. On the 22nd they first made use of gas. The wind was in the north-east and the French troops, who were at the northern end of the salient, suddenly observed a cloud of green vapour advancing towards them like a mist. As the fog advanced it was discovered to be poisonous: it filled the soldiers' lungs, preventing them from breathing, and also blinded them. No troops in the world, however good their discipline may be, can stand against such an attack, and the French troops became demoralised. The Canadians were less affected by the gas, for the cloud passed to the west of them and they managed to stand their ground; but a breach nearly four miles long was made in the Allied lines. Meanwhile the bombardment of the city went on and the British troops were forced out. They did not, however, retreat, but gradually worked their way up to the front to relieve or support the front line troops. The battle went on continuously for days, the Allied troops showing the greatest determination and courage in spite of the most terrible hardships; for owing to the work of the German artillery supplies of food, ammunition, clothes,

etc., could not be brought up from Ypres itself : indeed, on one day, the troops had nothing but a little bread and cheese for twenty-four hours. The British soldier, in spite of overwhelming odds and under the most disheartening circumstances, was true to his traditions : he did not know when he was beaten , and since he did not know, no one else knew . . . and he was not beaten. In spite of a heavy bombardment and a second attack with gas on April 24th, our troops remained practically unmoved : in the subsequent days fresh troops and supplies were brought up : the staff officers, although the position was almost hopeless, never lost their heads or their nerve, and the obstinate resistance continued.

### **A Famous Charge.**

Finally, after weeks of heroic resistance, weeks which to the defenders must have seemed months, an opportunity was offered and a magnificent charge, which altered the whole position, was made by three cavalry regiments, the Blues, the 10th Hussars, and the Essex Yeomanry. The three regiments, although accustomed to fighting on horseback, charged on foot, and advanced as if they were on a parade ground and not on a battlefield. The Blues and the 10th Hussars were known all over the world as the finest cavalry regiments on earth ; but the Essex Yeomanry, who before the war had not been professional soldiers, showed themselves equal to the best. They were greatly helped by a detachment of the Duke of Westminster's armoured motor cars, which did wonderful work.

This was really the end of the second battle of Ypres. The fighting gradually died down and the Germans,

realizing that they could not advance, ceased to attempt the impossible. Our troops, led by the finest officers in the world, proved themselves worthy of their leaders. General Sir Douglas Haig and Lt.-General Sir Herbert Plumer were the two English commanders; and their skill, daring, and bravery were admired and imitated by every officer and every man.

### **Gas.**

This was the first occasion on which "gas" was used by the Germans; the use of such methods is strictly contrary to International Law and is so inhuman that no one but a German could possibly have thought of adopting it. Sir John French, speaking of it, said, "During the period under report the fighting has been characterized on the enemy's side by a cynical and barbarous disregard of the well-known usages of civilized war . . . As a soldier I cannot help expressing the deepest regret and some surprise that an army which hitherto has claimed to be the chief exponent of the chivalry of war should have stooped to employ such devices against brave and gallant foes." But, although the Germans used foul means and fought in a manner unworthy of the name of man, they were not successful: the devilishness of their methods inspired our men in the field with a determination to resist them as long as body and soul would permit, and our civil population at home to obtain, by any means possible, a defence against such inhuman warfare.



## CHAPTER IX.

### From the Second Battle of Ypres Onwards.

IN June 1915, the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, announced that the British casualties up to May 31st were as much as 258,000, of whom 50,000 were dead. Against these losses we had very little to show : we had resisted the Germans, but we had done very little more. In the meanwhile Germany had been very active at sea : she had sunk, by means of her submarines, a large number of ships, and on May 7th the news arrived of the sinking of an unarmed liner, the *Lusitania*, one of the largest ships in the world, and of the loss of 1500 passengers. The people of England understood this to be a direct challenge on the part of Germany, meaning that she would leave nothing undone which could lead to the defeat of her enemies ; and they at once determined to meet the German spirit in the way which it deserved. It was felt that there was a grave shortage of supplies,—of food, of guns, of ammunition, and, indeed, of men—it was quite certain that “ the operations of war, not only of our army, but of our Allies, were being crippled, or at any rate hampered, by our failure to provide the

necessary ammunition" <sup>1</sup> On May 19th, therefore, some changes were made in the Cabinet, and in particular a new Ministry, the Ministry of Munitions, was formed. The first Minister of Munitions was Mr. Lloyd George, a man whom the country trusted to be able to bring about the much needed reforms. That he was able to do so will be seen later.

### **Foch Advances.**

Meanwhile, however, the German successes in Russia were becoming alarming: Mackensen's offensive, which began at the end of April threatened a serious disaster in the East. It was therefore necessary to remove the pressure at the Eastern Front by an attack at some vital point on the West. A double advance was therefore planned in the North of France, in the country called Artois, the aims being the cities of Lens and Lille. Of these the first undertaken by the French under General Foch was the most important. On May 9th the French began the most terrific bombardment that had till then been experienced. In the course of the day more than 300,000 shells were fired. Following up the artillery preparation the French infantry advanced rapidly and before the night of the 10th they had captured three lines of trenches, and had taken 3,000 prisoners. For the next two days the advance continued, and it seemed as if the German line had been broken. This, however, was hardly the case, for a large number of small isolated German posts still remained. These were small redoubts difficult of attack by heavy artillery, and containing numerous machine guns. The fighting, therefore, until

<sup>1</sup> *Mr Asquith at Newcastle.*

the end of May at this part of the line resolved itself into small isolated engagements. By the end of the next month, however, it was clear that the French success, though not absolutely decisive, was a very considerable one. In particular it proved the need for artillery.

### **Festubert.**

The second attack was supplementary to the French attack, and centred round the village of Festubert. Here between May 16th and 26th our troops, among whom were some Indian regiments, pierced the enemy's lines on a front of four miles and took a considerable number of prisoners. Here, however, as in Artois the enemy's line when broken did not bend, and the small field fortresses, known as redoubts, had to be taken individually and separately.

### **The Argonne.**

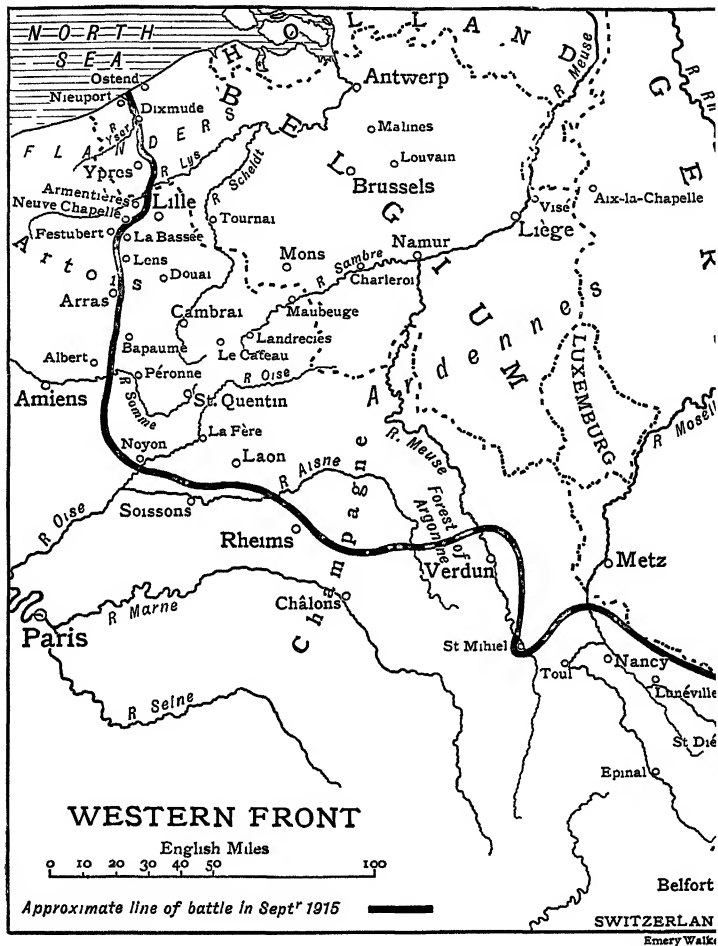
During the Summer of 1915 the only important action which was fought was the assault of the German Crown Prince in the forest of the Argonne north and west of Verdun. Here a battle raged from June 20th to the third week of July without any decisive result. The attack was probably an attempt on the part of the Crown Prince to recover his reputation, for he had been blamed for the battle of the Marne, and was trying to achieve a success to make up for his previous failure. True trench fighting now set in all along the front and various special devices were employed such as bombs, catapults, hand grenades and so forth. while quantities of barbed wire and other obstructions were increased

enormously, rendering natural defensive positions apparently impossible to capture

### **The General Position.**

By Sept. 1915 the position on the Western Front was this : from the North Sea to the Alps, a distance of almost 570 miles, two sets of fortresses were opposed to one another, sometimes at a distance of as little as thirty yards. On neither side did any really important advance seem possible ; for on the one side the Germans had less soldiers than the Allies, but had built up fortifications which could hardly be taken ; while, on the other, the Allies, although they had more men, had not the artillery nor the other mechanical means of breaking the enemy's front.

The line of battle in Sept. 1915 ran roughly as follows . it started on the Sea coast at Nieuport and then ran directly south until it reached the River Oise : thence it ran almost west, through the city of Rheims, to a point a little north of the fortress of Verdun ; after which it bent round, in a semi-circle, to the Swiss frontier, near the great fortress of Belfort. The Allied forces were arranged into three groups, the First (or North group) under General Foch, from the Sea to the Aisne ; the Second (or Central group) from the Oise to Verdun, under General de Castelnau ; and the Third, or Eastern Group, from Verdun to Belfort, under General Dubail. The British had three Army Corps, the First under Sir Douglas Haig, the Second under Sir Herbert Plumer, and the Third under Sir Charles Munro. Of these three armies the First and Second were in the northern portion of the region commanded by General Foch,



while the Third was to the south of it. These three armies were still under the command of Sir John French.

### **Champagne.**

In the Autumn of 1915 the Allied commanders determined upon a serious offensive; and it was decided that the chief attack should be in Champagne, that is to say, in the sector commanded by General de Castelnau; and at the same time that another, but a minor, attack should be made in the northern sector.

The chief attack began on Sept. 23rd, as before, with a heavy artillery bombardment; and for the next six days the French troops advanced, fighting with the "New Methods." The attack was on so great a scale, and at first seemed to be so successful, that it was thought at the moment that the German line would be broken, and the German troops forced to retreat. In actual fact, however, the Germans merely retired for a few miles, and the first battle of Champagne had hardly any result on the issue of the War except that it proved that the Allied troops were superior to the Germans, and that if the Allies could obtain sufficiently good artillery, the Germans would ultimately be beaten.

### **Loos.**

While the French were making this attack in the Champagne, the British in the northern sector, assisted by the troops of the Tenth French Army, attacked in the direction of Lens, between Arras and Lille. Here our troops were so successful in the first attack, and advanced so far, that the history of Neuve Chapelle repeated itself. Reinforcements could not be brought

up in time, and although our troops pierced the German lines, they could not advance any further, but were actually forced to retreat. This battle is generally known as the battle of Loos - it began on Sept. 25th and lasted about a week.

These battles in September were important, not because they marked any important advance on the part of the Allies, or even because they showed that the Allies were superior to Germany; they were important because from this point forward the Germans were put upon the defensive: they were fighting, not to win, but to avoid being defeated, and the results seemed to show that if the Allied artillery could be made equal to that of the Germans, and if the organization, or the work of the Staff, could become as good as that of the Germans, the Germans would, sooner or later, be defeated.

In the meanwhile, however, the Allies were suffering from (1) inadequate artillery, and (2) inadequate staff-work.

### **Winter, 1915.**

Towards the Winter of 1915 matters quietened down on the Western Front, and no progress was made by either side. Operations were limited to bombardments and occasional raids, but practically no ground was won or lost on either side. The time however was one of preparation until the time should come for the Allies to take the offensive. Until that time, no effort was spared to increase the output of materials, shells, guns, and all the apparatus of war. France had enormously increased her stock, and in England the production of shells in October was twice as much as it had been in

May. At the same time our Army was gradually growing: up to the end of the year we had lost almost 550,000 men, of whom over 128,000 were dead, and in order to keep the army up to its existing strength it was necessary to enroll at least 35,000 men per week. Lord Derby had, however, made the most superb effort, and by the end of the year our Fourth Army was almost complete. In Jan. 1916 Conscription was introduced into Great Britain. Additional changes in our forces were made at the same time. Our Indian troops, both Native and Home, left the Western Front. They had done their work. They had been called upon to fight a novel kind of warfare, under unfamiliar circumstances and a strange climate: under these most trying conditions they had done more than had been expected; and now the opportunity came for them to show their powers on fields nearer home and under circumstances more like those to which they were accustomed. Before they left, the Corps, consisting of the Meerut and Lahore Divisions, was paraded and the Prince of Wales read to them a letter from the King-Emperor: "You leave France," wrote His Majesty, "with a just pride in honourable deeds already achieved and with my assured confidence that your proved valour and experience will contribute to further victories in the new fields of action to which you will go."

### **Changes of Command.**

There were also changes in the Command of the greatest importance. Sir John French, after 18 months of the greatest strain and anxiety, resigned, and his place was taken by Sir Douglas Haig, who remained



the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces until the end of the War. Sir Douglas had commanded the First Army, and before the War had been known as a brilliant Staff officer, and one who well understood the necessity and functions of a good Staff.

Meanwhile our Air Force had been increased and improved beyond expectation, and by the beginning of the new year we had proved our superiority, both in men and in machines, to the Germans.

### **Verdun.**

The year 1916 began with one of the most important battles of the War and one of the longest battles in history, the first battle of Verdun. What may be called the first phase of the battle lasted from Feb. 20th to the second week in April. Verdun is the northernmost of the four great fortresses or, to be more correct, armed camps, which guard the Eastern frontier of France, the others being Toul, Epinal, and Belfort. It was, naturally, a position of the greatest importance, and there were several reasons why the Germans desired to take it. In the first place, there seemed to be a possible chance of breaking the French lines at this point. The German commanders had recently been successful against the Russian fortresses of Brest Litovsk and Korno and they thought that if they could bring up sufficient artillery they could capture Verdun and Toul in the same way. Again, Verdun was a famous historical fortress and its capture would be greeted in Germany with the greatest enthusiasm: it would be the greatest event in the War, a greater success than the fall of Liège or Antwerp. Then, again, it was in the area of the

Crown Prince's command, and that young man was not so popular either with his troops or in Germany as was desirable.

### **The First Offensive.**

Accordingly on Feb. 21st a great German offensive was begun. Gigantic stores of artillery and ammunition were brought up and as many as fifteen divisions of men were employed. The German success was immediate, but did not continue in the first four days four miles of ground were gained, and the important fort of Douaumont, situated only eight miles from Verdun itself, fell. On March 10th Fort Vaux, which is even nearer the city, was seriously endangered. But that was all. In the meantime, a new French Commander had appeared, who was to become the hero of one of the most famous sieges in history. This was General Pétain. At the beginning of the War he had been the Colonel of the 33rd Regiment, and in 1915 he had done brilliant work in Champagne. He was considered one of the most brilliant of the French Generals, and was called upon to perform the greatest task. That task he performed. By April the 10th the first phase of the battle was over, and Verdun was saved; and while the French had lost, perhaps, 100,000 men, the German losses were twice that number. The bravery of the French troops against overwhelming odds was equalled only by that of the British at Mons and at the first battle of Ypres. Every soldier trusted in himself, in his commanders, and in his country. A dying French soldier is reported to have said, "We are but a minute in the Eternity which is France."

One of the objects of the first battle of Verdun had been to force the Allies, especially in the North, to undertake a premature offensive. The German lines in Flanders were not held so strongly as those further South, and this part of the line seemed a good place for an attack. The line of battle from Ypres as far as the Somme had been taken over by the British, who had been organizing their forces and levying troops at great speed. In fact by Midsummer we had as many as five million troops in arms in different parts of the world; but although a serious attempt might perhaps have been successful, it was considered advisable to put it off; and in the Spring, although there was considerable local fighting round Ypres, especially in February, there was no real battle of anything like the importance of the battle of Verdun.

### **The Attack Renewed.**

Meanwhile, however, the Crown Prince's offensive was renewed. The second battle of Verdun began on May 3rd and continued for very nearly 130 days. By this time the French command had been changed and Verdun was now defended by General Nivelle. Like General Pétain, Nivelle had been a Colonel at the beginning of the War, and was destined to become Commander-in-Chief of the French armies. On May 21st the French retired towards Verdun and it seemed as if the city would fall—and by June Fort Vaux, one of the "key forts" of Verdun, fell; but the Germans were unable to advance any further, and by the end of June 1916, the German attack had definitely failed. They had penetrated the French lines within four

miles of the city, but further than that they could not go. After the first week of the battle the assault became spasmodic, because the Germans could not maintain sufficient artillery superiority, while, man for man, they were inferior to the French.

## CHAPTER X.

### The Battle of the Somme and Arras.

THE second battle of Verdun ended in June 1916 in a failure for the Germans, but they were soon occupied elsewhere, for during the early months of the year Sir Douglas Haig had been quietly preparing for an attack on a scale which had not before been attempted. In fact it may be said to be the most important battle of the War, for when the practically continuous series of operations which succeeded it were finally concluded, the War was won and the Armistice was in sight. This was the Battle of the Somme, and the ground of the first fighting was the line opposite the two towns of Bapaume and Péronne. There had been very little fighting in this part of the front since 1914: the Germans had constructed a wonderful system of trenches and fortifications, and they thought that they were impregnable.

The chief objectives were the towns of Bapaume and Péronne themselves, particularly the former in order to obtain it, it was necessary to command the three roads leading to it from Albert, Maricourt, and Péronne. On July 1st the British attack commenced, and as the result of four days' hard fighting an advance of five miles was made. The first German line was broken in the

first week of July, when we captured over 6,000 prisoners: at the same time the French advanced towards Péronne, having taken the Germans by surprise.

Our men continued to advance slowly but surely, and by the 17th the German second line was broken. About five miles south-west of Bapaume, however, there runs a long wooded ridge, and here the Germans made most desperate resistance. They brought up large reinforcements and recaptured several of their lost positions, but on the right our troops, under General Gough, advanced a considerable distance, and by the middle of September the ridge was in the hands of the British. It was in this month that Tanks were first used by our troops: they caused the utmost consternation among the Germans, and were a source of great amusement to our men as they wobbled or waddled up-hill and down-hill, over trenches and banks, and were capable of knocking down buildings and even crushing fortifications.

The village of Combles was occupied on Sept. 26th and Thiepval the next day, and our troops were now fighting on the downward slopes of the ridge towards Bapaume and the river Ancre. Since the German first and second lines had been broken, it was hoped that open fighting might now take the place of trench warfare, but unfortunately towards the end of October and the early part of November the weather was very bad and the state of the roads made further operations impracticable.

### **Verdun.**

Meanwhile the fighting to the north of Verdun had been resumed. On Oct. 24th General Nivelle made a

carefully prepared attack upon the German positions, and after several days' hard fighting, and in spite of the most obstinate resistance, recaptured Fort Vaux on Nov. 2nd. A second equally successful attack was made early in December, during which more than 12,000 prisoners were taken and the French were able to establish themselves so firmly that not only was Verdun finally saved, but any further German advance was rendered practically impossible.

### **A New Advance.**

In the second week of November the weather improved so much that a new Allied attack in the region of the Somme and Ancre was made possible. The Germans had been able to strengthen their lines ; but, on the other hand, we had the advantage of holding the Thiepval ridge and could attack the Germans from two sides. After two days' fighting our lines were advanced two miles, as many as 5,000 prisoners were captured, and positions which the enemy thought impregnable were captured.

The battle of the Somme really continued more or less until the end of the War, but the first phase of it came to an end in December 1916. We did not succeed in capturing either Bapaume or Péronne, but we relieved the French in their defence of Verdun by drawing off the German troops to another part of the line, and we made ourselves masters of the dominant positions on the high ground, and so were able to take the offensive ourselves instead of merely defending our positions. Moreover the German losses were enormous : more than half a million men had been

brought from other parts of France and from the Eastern Front, and it is probable that at least a quarter of these were casualties. The French and ourselves took over 100,000 prisoners and 1500 machine guns, besides many heavy guns and trench mortars. The Allies' losses were very heavy, but their great gain lay in the fact that they had at last begun to take the offensive, and in this sense the battle of the Somme and Ancre was the beginning of the end.

### **French Change of Command.**

In December General Joffre resigned his command of the French armies, a post which he had filled with the greatest distinction since 1914. On his retirement he was made a Marshal of France, an honour which had not been conferred since the time of Napoleon I. General Nivelle, who had saved Verdun, became the leader of the French armies.

During the first two months of 1917 no action of any definite importance took place in the West, but certain changes were made, and the British troops took over a portion of the French line until they eventually held more than 100 miles of trenches on the whole front. The Germans, however, had been making considerable preparations. They had suffered so much in men and guns and the loss of important defensive positions that they now decided to shorten their line, and, in the winter of 1916, they prepared a new defensive system at the back of their lines, to which they proposed to retire.

### **The Hindenburg Line.**

The line to which they withdrew was known as the Hindenburg line, so called after the German commander



who devised it. It ran from a few miles south of Arras, then west of Cambrai and St. Quentin, and joined the main German line on the River Aisne to the east of Soissons. By the middle of March observers from aeroplanes observed that the German lines were very thinly held; but that behind the lines there was great activity, and on March 17th our troops made a general advance. Bapaume and Péronne soon fell, and by the beginning of April our troops were within a mile of St. Quentin. By this time we had come up against the Hindenburg line itself, and any further advance was, for the moment, impossible. Since the Germans had made careful preparations for their retreat, our advance was not really of any very great importance; and the enemy in retreating had destroyed everything in his path, so that where there had been villages there were not even houses left standing: the bridges, roads, and railways had all been systematically destroyed, and even the fruit trees had been cut down. However, the German retirement showed that they were not comfortable where they were and they were anticipating a forced retreat. The new Hindenburg line was, as has been seen, immensely strong, and it is almost incredible that an attempt should have been made to break it; but such an attempt was made and the result was the battle of Arras.

### **Arras.**

This battle began on April 9th. By this time we had five armies on the Western Front, the First under General Horne, the Second under General Plumer, the Third under General Allenby, the Fourth under General

Rawlinson, and the Fifth under General Gough. It was now arranged that the First and Third armies should attack in the North and from the direction of Arras, while the Second and Fifth, together with the French, attacked steadily, but with not so great numbers, further South, about St. Quentin and Cambria. The battle was an immediate success. The German first line, which had almost been annihilated by our Artillery, was captured in a few hours, and, shortly after, Canadian troops, under General Sir Julian Byng, captured Vimy Ridge, north of Arras, a position which was considered impregnable, and which had defied our hottest attacks for over two years. South of Arras our infantry captured a very strong post called the "Harp," which was situated at the point where the new Hindenburg line joined the original German line. By the evening of the first day we had obtained a footing in the German third line along the whole front. The battle continued for five more days · the Hindenburg line was pierced at two places, and our whole line continued to advance in spite of a blinding snow-storm. By April 15th Sir Douglas Haig had obtained all that he had aimed at.

### **The Wotan Line.**

We had taken 14,000 prisoners and more than 200 guns, many of which were turned against the Germans themselves. The British Commander now intended to break off the battle and to consolidate his gains, but General Nivelle was about to start an important offensive on the Aisne, and General Haig therefore agreed to continue his advance so as to prevent Prince Rupprecht of

Bavaria, the German Commander, from sending reinforcements to the German Crown Prince. The weather now began to improve and after a week's preparation our attack recommenced. The Germans had by this time prepared a second line behind the Hindenburg line: this was known as the "Wotan" line. Our progress was now much slower than before: General Haig had no desire to advance to a great depth or to capture a great extent of territory: his chief aim was to keep the Germans so busy that they could not send any reinforcements elsewhere.

**"Pill-boxes."**

The fighting in the Arras sector, then, continued until the third week in May: by that time it had quite changed its character. On our side the most important innovation was the introduction of a large number of tanks; while the Germans had adopted a new system of defence, known to our soldiers as "Pill-boxes." It had been found that trenches and "dug-outs" could be rendered untenable by shell-fire, and in fact could be utterly demolished. In order, therefore, to avoid machine gun positions being entirely annihilated, a more permanent form of defensive position was necessary. The "Pill-boxes" were cylinders made of concrete, big enough each to hold from four to ten men. These cylinders were sunk in the ground, so that they only stuck up a few feet from the surface: they had lids or roofs of steel, and were armed with machine guns. As the Germans constructed many thousands of these, scattered broadcast and near together all over the front, and as they could not very well be demolished except by a direct hit from

a shell, they gave our troops a very great deal of trouble, and rendered our advance very much slower.

The general result of the battle of Arras was that we had broken up more than ten miles of the Hindenburg line, and threatened the shorter "Wotan" line we had gained about sixty square miles of territory on a twenty mile front, and had captured more than 20,000 prisoners and a vast quantity of guns. What was perhaps even more important, we had assisted General Nivelle in his operations on the Aisne by preventing reinforcements being sent to the Germans. As it was, General Nivelle's attack failed in its object (*see next Chapter*); but, had German reinforcements been sent, the French would have met with nothing less than a great disaster.

## CHAPTER XI.

### Nivelle at the Aisne: Third Ypres, Verdun and Cambrai.

WHILE the British 1st and 3rd armies were engaged at Arras our 4th and 5th armies were engaged further south, without being able to advance ; while further south still, between the Oise and the Aisne, and towards the Argonne forest, General Nivelle had been delivering a heavy attack. About four miles north of the Aisne, along the row of hills, runs a road known as the "Chemin des Dames"—The Ladies' Road. North of the ridge lies a valley, and north of that the city of Laon. This was General Nivelle's objective, and he expected to take it without great difficulty. After a terrific artillery bombardment lasting nearly a week, a great attack was launched on April 16th on a fifty-mile front. The French left, under General Mangin, was most successful, and obtained possession of the greater part of the Ladies' Road: the centre advanced more slowly, but the right under General Anthoine made some progress. General Nivelle now began to realise that his progress would be slower than he had hoped: Craonne, an important town at the eastern end of the road, gave a great deal of trouble, and it was not until May 4th that

it fell. By that time the French had gained the greater part of the ridge and had captured 20,000 prisoners ; but they never reached the valley and Laon still remained safe in German hands.

### **Foch.**

On May 15th changes were made in the French command. General Nivelle's place was taken by General Pétain, the hero of Verdun, while General Foch was appointed Chief of the General Staff at Paris. These changes were important, for General Foch was above all things a man of action, and his policy was to attack and attack and keep on attacking, never letting the Germans have time to rest, and always varying his offensives so that the Germans could not tell where the next Allied attack would fall. It was General Foch's strategy which won the War for the Allies, but it was many months before he could carry out his policy ; for the Germans during the Autumn and Winter of 1917 were preparing for an offensive on a larger scale than had ever been attempted, and they were now being reinforced by troops drawn from the Russian Front.

### **Moronvillers.**

In the meanwhile, however, during May, June and July the French attacks along the ridge continued. In the third week of May General Anthoine obtained a great success at Moronvillers, in which three important hills were captured, and in one day over 6,000 prisoners were taken. The next two months were occupied by the French in consolidating their gains and in warding

off German counter-attacks. The Germans made countless attacks against the French positions with specially selected troops, but the French were able to repel them and to maintain the ground won.

Generally speaking, General Nivelle's offensive had failed. None of the objectives were obtained: on the other hand, the important line of hills north of the Aisne had been taken and held. It is a question, however, whether the offensive was made at the right point: an attack in equal strength at some other part of the line would probably have been much more effective.

### **Preparations for Third Ypres.**

Meanwhile, further north, Sir Douglas Haig had been preparing a new offensive in the neighbourhood of Ypres. But before any great attack could be made here, it was necessary to clear the Germans out of their positions on a ridge south of the city, where there were two important villages called Wytschaete and Messines. For months before, R E. tunnelling companies, containing a large proportion of Welsh and Cornish miners, had been undermining these hills, and filling the mines with thousands of pounds of explosive. On June 7th the mines were exploded. Such an explosion had never been heard before, and never has been since: what it can have been like to those on the spot cannot be imagined, but the sound was heard as far off as Surrey in England, a distance of well over 100 miles. Solid hills were blown bodily into the air, and over the ruins our troops advanced, as methodically as if they had been a clock-work machine. Irish troops captured Wytschaete and

New Zealanders made their way into the ruined village of Messines. Our men were supported by Tanks, but in some cases the Infantry advanced so rapidly that the Tanks could not keep pace with them. All the next day our troops were busy destroying "Pill-boxes" and cleaning the woods of German troops. The Germans made several counter-attacks, but they failed, and we remained in possession of the ridge.

Preparations were now made for the coming attack. General Anthoine's First French army was brought up from the Chemin des Dames to north of Ypres, while our Fourth army under General Rawlinson took the place of the French between the Belgians and the coast. This latter force met with disaster, for when an attempt to advance along the coast was made two English battalions—The Northants and the King's Royal Rifles, who held positions in front of the Yser canal, were violently attacked, the bridge on the Yser was destroyed by artillery fire, and with their retreat cut off, our troops were practically annihilated, only 70 men escaping by swimming the canal.

*From the Third Battle of Ypres Forward.*

The third battle of Ypres began on July 31st, 1917, with a continued heavy bombardment of the German positions, begun some days before; while, as our troops advanced, liquid fire was directed against the German troops holding the front line, and our aviators, flying close to the ground, attacked them from above with machine guns. The French, under General Anthoine, soon obtained possession of the canal which runs



north from Ypres, while a little further south English and Welsh regiments obtained possession of the high ground east of it. East and north-east of Ypres the Germans were driven back even further. Our early successes could not however be pushed further; for the German system of defence had been very carefully planned. General von Armin, who was in command of the German forces at this point of the front, was the designer of the system of "pill boxes"; and after our troops had captured the German first line and had advanced two miles on a front of ten miles, they found themselves opposed by a system of these small forts, each of which was connected with its neighbour by an immensely strong system of barbed wire. Every position, therefore, had to be taken separately, and our further advance was consequently very slow. Throughout August and during the first three weeks of September we advanced, but advanced very slowly; and all the time the weather was against us, for it rained constantly for six weeks. In September, however, the rain ceased somewhat, and by the last week we had advanced over a mile on a front of eight miles and had taken the important positions of Zonnebeke and the Polygon Wood. During October we again advanced, capturing Poelecapelle, Gheluvert and other important points on the Passchendaele Ridge. On Nov. 6th Passchendaele itself was captured by Canadian troops and our positions were made safe for the winter.

The Third battle of Ypres, although it was in no sense decisive, won back for us all the ground that we had lost in the first and second battles, and a little more. The conditions under which our troops fought

were appalling : almost throughout there was continual rain or sleet, and in several cases our men fought up to their necks in mud. The resistance of the Germans in pill-boxes and machine gun "nests" was the most stubborn that we had met, and their resistance was equalled only by the dash and gallantry of our troops. The casualties were naturally high on both sides, and besides, our troops took 24,000 prisoners.

### **Further South.**

Further south there was some most important fighting. There had been a change of the command of the British Third army, for General Allenby had left to take over the command in Palestine : his place was taken by General Sir Julian Byng, a most distinguished cavalry leader, who had recently commanded the Canadian troops in the capture of Vimy Ridge. The Third army was stationed between Arras and St. Quentin, facing towards the city of Cambrai and the Hindenburg line.

On Nov. 20th a sudden and quite unexpected offensive was delivered. The attack was made with Tanks followed by Infantry, and the Germans were taken entirely by surprise. The fighting was on a front of about ten miles and lasted for three days. By that time we had actually reached the outskirts of Cambrai, having advanced five miles and taken 10,000 prisoners, which, when the shortness of the time is considered, was marvellous. It was thought at the time that every minute we should capture Cambrai, break through the German line and drive them back into Belgium. We were, however, doomed to disappointment, for on Nov. 30th we in our turn were taken by surprise, and were

driven back much as we had driven the Germans, and we lost several thousands of prisoners and a number of Tanks. What alone saved us from a complete disaster was the Guards' Division, who, although they had been fighting continuously for two days and were hoping for some rest, were brought up with great rapidity, and, aided by some dismounted cavalry and some Tanks and machine guns, stopped the advance and drove the Germans back. It was not the first time that the Guards had prevented a disaster, and now what might have been a disaster was almost turned into a triumph.

### **Other Parts of the Western Front.**

In another part of the front there was important fighting in the last half of 1917. At Verdun there had been attacks and counter-attacks during the summer, and on Aug. 20th a great French attack was begun. This lasted for a week, and at the end of it the Germans were driven back on both sides of the river Meuse with a loss of 10,000 prisoners, and Verdun was at last out of the range of the German guns.

In October the Sixth French army, under General Maistre, pushed forward two and a half miles on the Chemin des Dames, capturing Fort Malmaison, the only point held on the ridge by the Germans, and taking 8,000 prisoners. By the end of the month the French had command of all the high positions, and completely dominated the Germans in the valley to the North of them.

For the next few months there was no fighting of any importance on the whole of the Western Front. The Germans continued to bring up divisions from Russia

in order to strengthen their positions , while, on the other hand, the Allies' forces were weakened by the losses at Ypres and Cambrai and by the troops which had been sent to the help of Italy. It seemed quite certain that the next great offensive would be made by the Germans and it was a matter of grave anxiety :—

(1) whether we should be able to hold our line and should have enough reserves at any point where we were attacked ;

(2) where and how the Germans would attack us ;

(3) whether the American troops, which had been in preparation since April, would be sufficiently trained to be available in adequate numbers. The weeks until March 1918 were therefore spent in deliberation and preparation on both sides.

## CHAPTER XII.

### The Somme and the Lys.

THERE were many grounds for the belief that Germany would make a supreme effort in the Spring of 1918. First, very nearly half a million of men had been released from the Russian front; secondly, Italy was, at least in the view of the German command, crushed: thirdly, the United States were not ready—their men were not trained, and they were, in spite of many months' preparation, short of munitions; fourthly, the French had been exhausted at Verdun and in the Champagne, and the British at Ypres and Cambrai; lastly, it was absolutely necessary for Germany to deal a "knock-out blow"; for it seemed certain that, if Germany could not win in 1918, she would never win at all—and if she did not win, she had failed, for the German public would revolt. Militant Germany had for so long been successful, that a failure meant its downfall, and meant that the many years' painstaking work in building up the Empire, would at once crumble into nothing. The Kaiser and his helpers had promised Germany a "Place in the Sun," and had held out hopes of a world-domination; yet in the Spring of 1918 these hopes seemed far from fulfilment. It was clear that a great German success

on the Western Front would restore confidence in Germany, and would inspire Germany's troops and Germany's civil population to still greater efforts for the predominance of her arms. A great German offensive was therefore a certainty; and, indeed, von Hindenburg and von Ludendorff had staked their reputation upon the success or failure of such an attempt. Every effort was put forward: no expense was spared. Germany, united Germany, was determined to stake everything, even their existence, on this one offensive.

### **Expectations.**

It was expected by the Allies that the German attack, when it came, would be directed against the portion of the front held by the British, and particularly between Arras and the River Oise. The British troops had been very much reduced by the fighting in 1917, and, further, they had taken over 28 miles of the front which had previously been held by the French. The portion between Arras and the Oise was held by the Third Army under Sir Julian Byng, and by the Fifth Army under General Gough. In these two armies there were 58 divisions, but these divisions had been reduced and probably did not number more than 10,000 men each, instead of the full strength of 15,000. Against them the Germans had more than 100 divisions—indeed, on the first day they threw 64 divisions into the attack. In fact, General Gough actually had 40 German divisions against 11 divisions, and 6 others in reserve.

### **The German Offensive.**

On the morning of March 21st, after a short but particularly heavy bombardment, the German attack

began on a whole front of 54 miles. They advanced in close order, preceded by Tanks and clouds of gas, and so rapid was their progress that our Artillery, or rather those of our guns which were in advanced positions, could not get into action at all. The British line was pierced at several points, but not actually broken. The Third Army held its own all day, but the Fifth Army was so much outnumbered by the enemy that it seemed almost impossible to prevent its complete surrender. As it was, in two days we were forced to abandon ground which it had taken four months' hard fighting in 1916 to win.

By March 25th our Third Army had retreated 15 miles and had taken up a line of defence between the villages of Albert and Bray. Yet this line, which it was hoped might be more or less permanent, could not be held, for we had no reserves ; indeed, the line would have been entirely broken had not General Grant, who was in command of the Engineers attached to the Fifth Army, collected a miscellaneous assembly of non-combatants, bringing stretcher-bearers and even cooks up to the fighting front, and held the line.

By March 27th it seemed that the city of Amiens would fall ; and had this occurred it would have been a terrible disaster for the Allies, for all communication between England and Paris would have been cut off. It would have been necessary to move the British Headquarters to the far West, and to abandon the Coast, and within a few weeks Paris itself would undoubtedly have fallen. The French armies, however, under General Fayolle, came most gallantly to our help in the South, and General Byng in the North showed himself

as capable in retreat as he had before proved himself in advance, and the German advance was, temporarily at least, checked.

### **United Command.**

It was at this point that the Allied Governments decided on a step which ultimately decided the result of the war. This was to place the entire direction of the Western Front in the hands of one man. Naturally, as the fighting was in France, and for the defence of France, a French general was appointed. This was General Foch, who had proved himself to be the most capable of all the French strategists. One of the great advantages of having one man in supreme command was that the whole Western Front was considered as one, and there was less danger than before of any one portion of the line being insufficiently guarded as had been in the case of this second battle of the Somme.

March 28th was a critical day for the Allies, for on it the Germans made a terrific attack on Arras, at the north part of the battlefield. The enemy infantry attacked with great determination, advancing shoulder to shoulder, and in six successive lines. Their losses were terrible, for so solid a body was an easy target for our machine guns, but by reason of their numbers and compactness they forced their way forward by the very weight of the attack. Two such attacks were made during the day, but both were repulsed, and Arras was saved. Indeed, these attacks marked the end of the battle so far as the Northern portion was concerned; for a week or more there was fighting, but Byng's army was not in any danger of being cut off.



**Further South.**

South of the Somme, however, there was a serious menace. General Gough with the Fifth army was fighting here. He had been in charge of the retreat, and it was thought at the time that he could have saved many men, for the Fifth army was almost cut to pieces. He was not, however, to blame, for he had fought against terrific odds, and had been given a line to hold which was too long for the forces at his disposal. He and his Staff were now relieved by General Rawlinson and the Staff of the Fourth army. This Fourth army and the French under General Fayolle were now subjected to an attack similar to that made against Byng. The fighting went on for several days and the issue was for long in doubt, for the French were slow in bringing up their reserves. Fortunately, however, the Allies were able to keep their lines intact, although they retreated until the Germans were within seven miles of Amiens. On the 4th of April the Germans made a last effort to capture Amiens and to cut off the Third and Fourth armies; here again they failed, and by April 6th the battle was over.

**Two German Failures.**

The Second Battle of the Somme, as this general engagement has been called, was perhaps the turning point of the War: certainly it was one of the most important battles. The Germans cannot be said to have gained a victory, for the Allied lines remained unbroken. Though driven back, the Third and Fourth (or Fifth) Armies were not separated, and Arras and Amiens were not taken. On the other hand, for the Allies it was,

undoubtedly, a very severe defeat, for the two British Armies had been driven back 30 miles on a broad front with exceedingly heavy losses. But it was a glorious defeat, for the Allies had against them at one time or another 127 German divisions (Country Reserves), and all the ordinary conditions of warfare were changed,<sup>1</sup> but the defeat was not a disaster owing to the glorious fighting character and the heroic stubbornness of the British soldiers, who, as ever, did not know when they were beaten.

### **Another German Failure.**

Immediately after this attempt to break our lines, the Allies suffered what again might be called a defeat, but which meant a failure for Germany: this was an attempt made further north on the River Lys, south of Ypres. Our line here was thinly held, mostly by men who had been brought from the Somme, and who were supposed to be resting in a quieter part of the front. They were the First army, under General Horne, and the Second, under General Plumer, the River Lys being between the two. There were also two divisions of Portuguese troops. The actual fighting was most confused; it went on from April 7th to the end of the month. Two things may be noticed at once: the first was that the German plan failed owing to his not knowing the disposition of our troops. Our flying men had established such a superiority in the air that no German aeroplanes came over our lines: consequently the Germans did not know where the weakest points were,

<sup>1</sup>The conditions were changed in the sense that the rules laid down in Military text-books were broken.

and as a matter of fact they did not attack them, but made their chief attempts against the points which were held most strongly. The second was that the German attack was too much for the Portuguese, who broke and ran ; indeed, a great number of them were killed by the British, who had orders to stop any movement from east to West.

### **Kemmel Hill.**

Actually the Germans advanced to a depth of about eight miles on a front of about fifteen. There was desperate fighting at every point, particularly at Festubert, Givenchy, and Kemmel Hill. The last place was where the chief attack was made. The Germans attacked three separate times, and each time were repulsed, but our losses here were even greater than on the rest of the battle front, although there there was some of the fiercest fighting of the war. The battle went on about three weeks, until the end of April, when the fighting died down. Here, as on the Somme, we had suffered defeat and lost thousands of brave men, but the Germans had not gained a victory or obtained their object, which was to cut off the British in Flanders, and so ultimately obtain the command of the coast. With this battle ended the first great German offensive of 1918. It may be said to have ended in failure to Germany and disaster to the Allies. We had lost 1500 square miles of territory ; our casualties (combined British and French) were not less than 300,000. We had lost over 1000 guns, 100 tanks, and material to the value of £10,000,000. The Germans lost perhaps 500,000 in casualties.

Perhaps the greatest advantage to the Allies was that the Germans were beginning to grow tired. They had, however, 208 divisions against the Allies 168 (on the whole front), and it seemed certain that they would soon make another desperate effort to break the Allies' lines and to reach Paris. At present, however, there was a rest for a month.

### **The Second Offensive.**

The second great offensive of 1918 was forced upon the German commanders by the course of events. The public in Germany had been systematically taught that Germany could not be beaten. It was necessary to prove it to them. Paris must, at all costs, be taken. The advance of March and April had not been enough: some great and enduring triumph must be won and won quickly, before England's reserves could be brought into the battle, and before the armies of the United States were prepared to take their place in the field. The place chosen for the great attack was one which was remote from either the British or the French Headquarters, and yet one which was near to Paris. The one portion of the line which was indicated as suitable was the region of the Aisne, between Soissons and Rheims, in Champagne. This was the point where the Allied line turned from the North to South direction to one more or less East to West. The immediate object of the Germans was to obtain possession of the River Marne, and then, having obtained control of the important railway system with its centre at Châlons, to advance on Paris.

By the middle of May the army corps of the Crown Prince, in whose command the region of the Champagne

lay, had been strengthened until it numbered over 40 divisions. Of these 25 were for the first assault, and the other 15 in reserve. These 40 divisions formed two armies, the First and the Seventh, commanded by von Boehn and Fritz von Bulow. They lay between the town of Rheims and the River Ailette, facing the Chemin des Dames, which we have seen was wrested from them in 1917. Against them was part of the Sixth French army under General Maistre, four divisions in all; the Ninth British corps which was tired out and had been brought there to rest; and the Fifth French army under General Gouraud. Altogether the Allies had 8 divisions to meet the 25 German.

### **Second Aisne and Marne.**

On May 27th the great attack commenced; there was as usual artillery preparation, then an attack with tanks, and then the infantry advance. The Allies were soon driven off the ridge of the Chemin des Dames, and lost in a few hours ground that had taken them months to win. On the evening of the same day the Germans crossed the Aisne at several points.

On the 29th Soissons fell, and the enemy obtained a vast collection of Allied stores and munitions there and at Fère-en-Tardenois. By the 31st the River Marne was reached, and the Germans were within forty miles of Paris, between Château-Thierry and Dormans. Here the enemy were temporarily checked. General Foch managed to bring up his reserves, chiefly French colonial troops, but also containing troops from the U.S.A., who were at last given an opportunity of showing their worth. These troops prevented the Germans from crossing the

Marne, and at Château-Thierry they inflicted great losses on the enemy.

The Germans were halted here, but almost at once they began another offensive west of Soissons and attacked the town of Compiègne. Here the French retreated in good order, fighting magnificently, and causing great losses; they repelled the first attack, and counter-attacked most successfully, using for the first time "Baby" tanks, instruments which advanced so fast that the infantry could not keep up with them. The second German attack at this point was more successful, but though the French retreated, their line was unbroken.

In the middle of June Fritz von Bulow began a violent attack on the city of Rheims. Three German divisions attacked it from the north and got into the outskirts of the city, but they were finally beaten back and the city was saved.

### **The Last Attempt.**

In July the Germans made their last effort. They had seen four of their great offensives driven back or checked, on the Somme, on the Lys, and in the Champagne. It seemed as if their only chance of winning the war was by advancing rapidly towards Paris, and on July 15th an assault was made by 40 divisions east and south-west of Rheims on the Marne. The attack to the east was driven off by the French under General Gouraud—that to the west was more imposing and lasted longer, but it too failed. The enemy crossed the Marne near Château-Thierry, but here they found themselves faced by the U.S.A. troops, who had all the

advantage of being well trained and perfectly fresh. When it came to hand to hand fighting the Germans were no match for the Americans. A successful bayonet charge drove them back to the river, where many of them perished by drowning, and no less than 1500 prisoners were taken.

So ended the German offensive in the West, and it was the turn of General Foch.

## CHAPTER XIII.

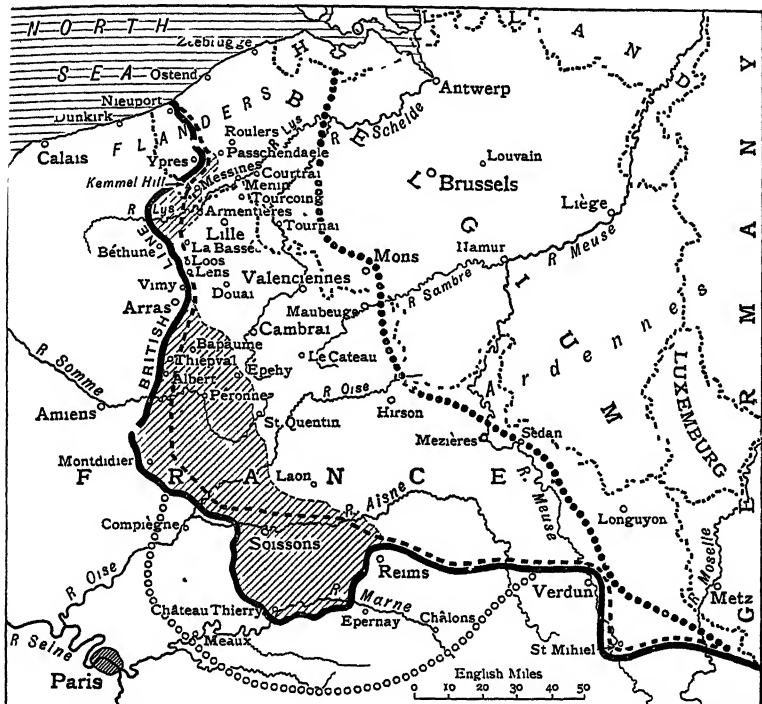
### The Allied Offensive.

THE principle on which General (afterwards Marshal) Foch trusted, was Attack. He believed that the war could not be won by merely defensive tactics. Hitherto, however, he had not possessed either the means or the power to begin an offensive. But by July 1918, circumstances had changed. The British troops had been largely reinforced, for in England alone every man up to the age of 50 had been called up; the Americans were now ready to enter the firing line, and, although they were not actually present in great strength, it was impossible to calculate how soon they would be available, and how many of them. Further, a new implement of war was now available—the light tank—called by the French the “Baby” tank, and by our troops the “Whippet,” being small, light, and speedy.

On July 18th there was a sudden change in the situation, so sudden indeed that it passed unnoticed at the time. On that day German troops had crossed the Marne, and were making for Epernay: by the next morning they had re-crossed the river, hotly pursued by the French and Americans, who captured 15,000 prisoners and 300 guns. They were completely taken by surprise



—Foch had suddenly thrown in a vast mass of men and had taken the offensive, an offensive which was to end



Emery Walker Ltd. sc.

*Germans farthest advance, September 1914 .*

*Approximate German line at the end of October 1914*

*German gains by their offensives of March and May-June 1918*

*Allied line at the beginning of their great offensive, July 18th 1918*

*Allied line at the Armistice, November 11th 1918*

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the war. By the 20th the Americans crossed the Marne at Château-Thierry, and Generals Mangin and Degoutte

drove back the Germans to the River Ourcq, and retook Fère-en-Tardenois on the 28th. By the end of the month the salient which the enemy had made in the Allied lines was flattened out, and by August 1st Soissons was recaptured.

From this point forward there was no question of the ultimate result; the French attack was not merely a counter-attack, nor was it made for defensive purposes. The Allies were now, thanks to the timely entry of the U.S.A. troops, superior both in men and munitions and guns. General Foch (who had now been raised to the rank of Marshal, a post which only he and Joffre had held since the time of Napoleon) was able to carry out his "forward policy," and he left the Germans no time to think

### **The Amiens Sector.**

Following up his success on the Marne, he now turned his attention to another section of the front, that of Amiens, where the First French army, under General Debeney, and the Fourth English army, under General Rawlinson, were situated. On August 8th these forces attacked the Germans with great success between the Rivers Ancre and Somme. Very shortly a big salient, five miles broad, was cut in the German lines. The battle was particularly notable for the success of the light "Whippet" tanks, which took the Germans by surprise and attacked them before they were aware that an action was going on at all, and in some cases actually made their way right through the German lines to the big gun positions at the back of them.

On Aug. 9th the French Third army, under General

Humbert, joined the Allies, and assisted in what had now become a pursuit. By the 12th, however, the attack temporarily died down, the Allies waiting to consolidate their positions. By this time the Germans had been driven back eight miles from their advanced positions, half the ground that had been lost in the Spring had been recovered, and the railway from Calais and Amiens to Paris was safe.

### **A New Attack.**

The attack in the Amiens section paused for about a week, but in the meanwhile Foch, determined to give the Germans no rest, attacked elsewhere with success. On the River Lys the British advanced and in the south General Mangin began an advance on the Oise, which a few weeks later obtained such important results. The most important movement began, however, on Aug. 21st, with the fighting between Arras and the Aisne. This was part of a great offensive, which gradually spread all along the Western Front from the North Sea to Verdun. The first phase of this offensive was between Arras and Soissons, the armies which were engaged being the First British (Horne), the Third (Byng), and the Fourth (Rawlinson); and the French First (Debeney), the Third (Humbert), and the Tenth (Mangin).

The attack on Aug. 21st was begun by General Byng. On that day and the next the railway between Arras and Albert was captured, Albert and Bray were occupied, and the German line was pushed back two miles. By the 26th our troops were back again at the Hindenburg line and the so-called "impregnable" positions, and

fighting at places that had been made memorable in 1916. The French, meanwhile, further south squeezed the German line by two flank attacks. Mangin moved up along the Oise and crossed the Ailette, while Humbert advanced over the Oise and captured Noyon. The last day of August was made notable by the capture by Australian troops of an important position which was part of the Hindenburg line itself, and where 1500 prisoners were taken.

Altogether between July 18th and Sept. 1st the Allies had captured 130,000 prisoners, of whom 57,000 were taken by the British; and the German commanders were now where they would be able to take up a stand, if indeed they could do so at all anywhere. In any case the offensive now rested with the Allies, and Foch was not disposed to lose his advantage and his opportunity. During September he continued to press the Germans, while he was preparing for a final and decisive blow.

### **The Autumn Offensive.**

In the first week of September the Australians advanced and took Péronne by storm, and together with London troops advanced along the Somme, where several villages were captured. All these villages were in a state of ruins, but the remains of the houses and buildings afforded shelter for the German machine guns, and like the "pill-boxes" they had to be taken separately and in detail. To do this required great pluck and entailed heavy casualties, but gradually, with the help of tanks, they were cleared

At the same time an offensive of the highest importance

was started east of Arras by General Horne's army. It was the most ambitious attempt so far made by our troops, for its object was the capture of the "Wotan" line from Drocourt to Quéant, the line which we had failed to reach in the battle of Arras. There were five lines, one behind each other, each line consisting of sets of very broad and deep trenches protected with thick hedges of barbed wire, and it was thought that not even tanks could get through them. By the second day of the attack we had broken through all five lines, and the Germans were in full flight. Here and east of Péronne in one week we captured nearly 20,000 prisoners, and the German hold on the important coalfields round about Lens was threatened.

Meanwhile the French armies of Humbert and Mangin were pressing along the Oise. The advance of both armies was very rapid, and very soon it seemed clear that Laon, St. Quentin and Cambrai would be recaptured.

### **St. Mihiel.**

On Sept. 12th the American army had its first success as an independent unit. Hitherto several of their divisions had been fighting with the British and French armies and as part of them. Now, under General Pershing, they were independent, and as if to show the Germans what they were to expect, they carried out, together with the French under General Pétain, an operation which, though it may have had very little effect on the result of the campaign, meant a great gain in prisoners and guns, and was also most disheartening to the Germans. This was the capture of the St. Mihiel salient, south of Verdun. The Germans had

held this narrow little triangle of country since 1914, and now they lost it in an afternoon. Simultaneous attacks were made on the south-east and north-west sides, and the salient was cut off at the base. Many Germans escaped, but 15,000 were taken prisoner, together with an immense amount of guns and material of war. The French and American generals rode together through the town, warmly welcomed by the inhabitants, who were mostly women and children.

### **A Wonderful Week.**

In this same first week of September the Hindenburg line was broken north of Cambrai; in the next, Mangin broke the German line further south, and in the third, in a battle lasting from Sept. 18th to the 21st, a deep wedge was driven into the line near St. Quentin. But the last week of the month saw the greatest triumphs, and this week was perhaps the most wonderful week of the war. On Sept. 27th the battle of "Cambrai and St. Quentin" began, and at the same time the French and Americans advanced in the Argonne between Rheims and Verdun, while in the north the Belgians, the French, and our Second army under General Plumer, advanced in Flanders. These three simultaneous attacks were of such importance, and the object with which they were made was so vital, that they deserve to be considered specially.

### *Foch's Triple Offensive.*

Marshal Foch's intention was nothing less than to prevent the whole German force from being able to

return to Germany. A glance at the map will show how this was possible. Between the great German fortress of Metz and the railway junction at Longuyon on the one hand, and on the other the junctions of Mezières, Hirson, Valenciennes, and Lille, there is a large extent of country known as the Argonne. Through this stretch of country there are no railways. Hence it was evident that Germany had to keep possession of these important junctions and also the line of railway between Longuyon, Mezières and Hirson. If the Allies could break this line, running laterally along the whole German front, the northern part of the German line would be cut off from the southern; and then if either or both parts of the whole army had to retreat they would have to do so through narrow gates. Germany had entered France (passing through Belgium and Luxembourg on the way) by two such narrow passages, the northern troops coming by way of Liège, the southern by Longuyon and Metz. If they retired by these two routes they would have to do so slowly, and the southern force at least might have to fight rearguard actions all the way; while, as regards the northern force, if a wedge were driven in at (say) Hirson, it might actually cut off all that northern force and prevent it from returning at all.

The object of this triple offensive on the part of Marshal Foch was this: (1) The southern attack was to break the German line and force all the southern part of the German forces to retreat through the narrow gap at Longuyon and Metz, where it could be followed up rapidly and broken to pieces as it retreated: (2) The attack at Cambrai was to turn the northern force in a northerly direction and pin it between the line Maubeuge-

Liège and the Frontier. (3) The coastal attack was to drive round the Germans in the direction of the hands of a clock and imprison it between itself and the force advancing from Cambrai, Valenciennes, and Maubeuge.

### **Foch's Plans carried out.**

Marshal Foch made his plans with consummate skill, and they were carried out magnificently by his army commanders.

(1) The first offensive was carried out by combined French and American troops. Here Generals Gouraud and Pershing, commanding the Fourth French Army and the American troops, attacked simultaneously. Pershing was near Verdun, Gouraud near Rheims. This attack was made on Sept. 26th. The French, having now plenty of reserves, quickly pushed forward further than they had been able to during 1915, when the first Champagne offensive was started. The Americans advanced more slowly, for they had difficult country in which to manoeuvre; but in each case in a few days great progress was made, and after an advance of 7 miles, over 20,000 prisoners were made by the combined forces.

(2) On the 28th the attack began in the northern portion of the front. King Albert of the Belgians was in command here. Besides the Belgian Army, he had French troops, and the British Second Army under General Plumer. In two days the Allies advanced further than they had done in three months in 1917. The Belgians advanced with great gallantry and captured Dixmude, and at the same time Plumer advanced from Ypres, won back all the ground which we had lost during



the Third Battle of Ypres, and went beyond it. After two days' fighting the enemy's hold on the coast was threatened in the North, while in the South the fall of Lille seemed imminent. Ten thousand prisoners were taken, while the Allied troops were ready to advance and take more.

(3) The most important of the three offensives was, however, that near Cambrai. The difficulty of breaking the line here was so great that Marshal Foch was doubtful as to whether it was possible. Sir Douglas Haig was asked to take upon himself the whole responsibility of the attempt. That he took this responsibility, and carried out the plan, is a proof both of his courage and of his ability, and the action which he then conducted was perhaps the most decisive of all in the war. The three armies which he commanded were under Generals Horne, Byng and Rawlinson. On Sept. 27th he began the attack with the Third Army, it was an army which had never known failure, and at the end of the first day the outskirts of Cambrai were in our hands. Over 10,000 prisoners were taken, and the Hindenburg line was broken for ever. The next day Rawlinson's army continued the work so well begun. Here, north of St. Quentin, a breach eight miles wide was made in the Hindenburg line. South of Cambrai the canal which joins the Scheldt was taken.

In the meanwhile, it must be remembered, the Allies had defeated the Bulgarians, and had practically forced them to surrender, while in Palestine three Turkish armies had been defeated, and further east General Marshall was advancing with a rapidity which had not before been experienced.

### Allied Successes.

Such operations, in so many places, and with success, were the beginning of the end. Foch, true to his principles, determined to give the Germans no rest. On the afternoon of Oct. 1st the French entered St. Quentin: on the 9th Cambrai fell after a ferocious defence. South of the city a desperate battle was fought; 10,000 prisoners were taken and the Germans fled as well as they could. Soon after, General Gouraud in the South drove the enemy back to ten miles north of Rheims, and here too the Germans were in full retreat.

The history of the war from this point forward was one continuous triumph for the Allies. On Oct. 13th General Mangin entered Laon and the Germans were running towards Hirson: on the same day the coast was freed; while on the 17th Lille itself was recaptured. This was a great triumph for the Allies. It was a most important railway centre, and the second greatest manufacturing town in France. It was captured by the Fifth British Army under General Birdwood, but the first troops that entered the city were the French, for our General realized that British troops could not refuse to the French the proud privilege of entering their own city first. Meanwhile in the North and on the coast the Germans had retired; on the 18th King Albert entered Ostend, being escorted thither by the English destroyer *Termagant*, which, in honour of the King and of his brave People, lowered her own flag and flew the Belgian colours.

On Oct. 17th a great advance was made near Hirson by the armies of Rawlinson and Byng and the First

French Army, and the German railway line was seriously threatened. At the same time a big advance was made by French and American troops on the Oise. The pressure went on at all points of the line, and by October 27th General Ludendorff, the German Commander-in-Chief, resigned his position, and recommended that the German Government should ask for an armistice. It is hardly to be wondered at, for since July 18th the Germans had lost 362,000 prisoners and over 6,000 guns.

### **Valenciennes.**

On Nov. 4th Austria surrendered, and the defeat of Germany only became more certain. Yet Foch still pressed forward, for if he did not do so the Germans might still hold the line of the Meuse during the winter. The next Allied triumph was at Valenciennes. A terrific battle began on Nov. 1st, and on the 3rd our troops entered the city, headed by the Prince of Wales, whose presence gave great joy to the inhabitants, for he seemed in himself to represent the British people. On the next day an even more decisive battle was fought about thirty miles to the south. "Twenty British divisions," says Sir D. Haig's report, "utterly defeated 32 German divisions, and captured 19,000 prisoners and 450 guns." But even so, our advance was not checked, but the Germans were now flying wherever they could, regardless of discipline, and only seeking to save their unworthy lives. Further south and east we continued our advance, and on Nov. 6th American troops entered the city of Sedan. It was at this city that in 1870 the French had capitulated to the Germans. Now the tables were turned.

**The Armistice.**

On Nov. 6th the Germans asked for an Armistice ; that is to say, a cessation of hostilities with a view to the arrangement of Peace terms. It was not, however, certain that the Germans meant what they proposed, and in dealing with so treacherous a foe every precaution was necessary. Meanwhile, our advance continued until it was clear that if an Armistice were not declared, all the German forces would be compelled either to capitulate or to be killed. On Nov. 11th an Armistice was signed ; on that day Canadian troops entered Mons, and the Great War ended, with British troops at the little village where the same troops had first shown their worth.

## PART IV

### THE EASTERN FRONT.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### Russia.

THE part taken by Russia in the War has been a tragedy, for it began with success and ended in disaster, caused by her own fault. At the beginning of the war Russia was looked upon by the Allies as their most loyal and most powerful support; but Russia was false to herself and to her friends, and, many months before the war ended, she had not only deserted her Allies but was actively aiding Germany; and, when Peace was declared, she was still at war with her own citizens and with the Allies. The downfall of Germany was great; but greater, sadder, and more decisive was the downfall of Russia.

When, on Aug. 1st, Germany declared war on Russia, the plan of the Grand Duke Nicholas, who was in supreme command of the Russian armies, was to attack simultaneously Eastern Prussia, in the North, and Galicia, in the South. Between these two countries lay Poland, which

kingdom had been divided up many years before between Germany, Russia, and Austria. As the Poles are more nearly allied to the Russians than to either the Germans or the Austrians, Russia hoped to conciliate Poland, and therefore refrained from invading her territories.

In Eastern Prussia, where the land is flat and marshy, the Russians immediately obtained considerable successes, and by the month of August they had gained an important victory at Gumbinnen. This victory was all the more important because it encouraged the Allied armies in the West in their difficult retreat towards Paris, and forced the Germans to divert to the Eastern Front forces which would otherwise have been used on the West. In Galicia and South Poland they gained a similar success.

In the meanwhile, on August 15th, Russia had acknowledged the independence of Poland.

During the following twelve months Russia was fighting on what amounted to three separate fronts, each of which must be considered separately. These fronts were (1) the Northern Front, in Eastern Prussia ; (2) the Southern Front, in Galicia ; and (3) the Central Front, in Poland.

### *I. The Northern Front.*

In the last week of August Germany realized the serious nature of the Russian advance, and General von Hindenburg was put in command of the German forces. He at once began a powerful counter-attack, and on Aug. 26th inflicted a crushing defeat on the Russians at Tannenberg, and drove them into the marshes, capturing

between eight and nine thousand prisoners. Continuing his advance, he crossed the Russian frontier on Sept. 15th, and reached the river Niemen by the 21st. On the 27th, however, General Rennekampf checked him at the river, and Hindenburg, realizing that he could neither advance further nor successfully remain where he was, began to retreat. The Russians followed him, driving him back and inflicting a serious defeat on him at what is called the Battle of Augustovo, but which was really a series of battles lasting from Oct. 1st to Oct. 9th. For the next two or three months little could be done on either side ; the Germans were hindered by the weather and the marshy nature of the country ; the Russians were short of men and of ammunition. At last, at the end of January, the Russians advanced towards Tilsit : their triumph, however, lasted only a short time, for by Feb. 7th, Hindenburg, who had obtained reinforcements, took them by surprise and drove them back to the Niemen. Again, however, the same story was repeated ; the Germans could not advance through the marshes, and early in March they again retired, and for some weeks nothing of importance occurred. In April, however, the Germans attacked the coast from the sea, and during the months of May and June they made a continuous and steady advance in Poland (North and East of the Niemen), the Russians fighting bravely, but being unable to stop them owing to their shortage of rifles, shells, and heavy artillery. On July 14th Przasnysz, which is due north of Warsaw, fell, and it seemed as if the Germans might capture Riga and Petrograd : about this period they also recommenced their operations by sea, and in August attempted to enter the Gulf of Riga

and to land men there. Their attempts were not successful, however; the Russian Baltic fleet engaged the German fleet and drove them from the Gulf, which they evacuated on Aug. 21st, having lost 8 destroyers, 2 cruisers, and 1 submarine.

## *II. The Southern Front : Galicia.*

A reference to the map will show that South Poland and the North of what was the Austro-Hungarian Empire are divided by the Carpathian Mountains. In this part the Russians were faced by the Austrians. It was the intention of the Austrians to fight the Russians with the Carpathians behind them, just as a man if he is attacked by another man, tries to "put his back to the wall," so that he may not be attacked from behind. The Russians, on the other hand, hoped that they might be able to drive the Austrians back over the Carpathians, and then rush down to the fertile plains which lie to the South.

Early in August the Russians advanced towards the city of Lemberg, the capital of Galicia. Further north the Austrians had attacked, but had been checked by the Russians. On August 27th the Russians captured the important town of Tarnopol, and began to advance towards the fortress of Lemberg. Lemberg was a position of the highest value to Austria, because it was a great railway centre. The Russians, marching forward with the greatest success, attacked Lemberg on Sept. 1st, and by the 3rd of the month the city had fallen. Following up their success the Russian troops under General Brussiloff advanced still further towards the important





fortresses of Jaroslav and Przemyśl. General Ivanov captured Jaroslav on Sept. 23rd, and about the same time Przemyśl was almost surrounded by the Russian troops. By the end of September it seemed that Russia had completely defeated the Austrian armies; anyhow, 100,000 prisoners had been taken, and the Austrian casualty list of killed and wounded amounted to as much as 250,000. Cracow, the capital of Galicia, was threatened, the Carpathians had been crossed, and the invasion of Hungary seemed to have begun.

### *III. Poland: the Central Front in the East.*

The Russians had been successful in the North, in Eastern Prussia, and in Galicia in the extreme South. They had not attempted any advance in Poland for political reasons, because, as has been said above, they hoped for the assistance of Poland.

In the winter, however, the Austrians managed to collect some reserves, and the Germans sent troops to their aid, and as the season advanced the fighting died down somewhat in the last months of the year. At the end of 1914, however, it seemed that early in the Spring the Russians would hold the whole of Galicia, and might even be able to occupy Silesia, which is an immensely important province, containing vast quantities of both coal and iron.

In both January and February of 1915 the Austrians made furious attacks on the Russians, and succeeded in driving them back for a time, but each time the Russians recovered their lost ground. Vast numbers of men were engaged on each side, and each side captured a tremendous number of prisoners and guns. The actual

figures are not reliable and are almost certainly exaggerated ; it is said that both the Austrians and Russians, when they occupied a piece of territory, claimed that they had taken prisoner all the inhabitants who had been there before the war began.

### **Przemysl Falls.**

On March 22nd, 1915, Przemysl actually fell. It had been surrounded by the Russians since September, and now it surrendered to them. It was an important gain for Russia, because it relieved the armies which had been surrounding it, and enabled them to be used elsewhere. Immediately after the fall of Przemysl the Russians advanced through the Carpathians, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy, and taking a large number of prisoners. But here their success stopped. The Germans sent immense reinforcements to help the Austrians on this front, and the Russians, although they had enormous numbers of men, had not enough ammunition to be able to resist the German artillery. This, indeed, throughout the war was Russia's chief weakness ; she had very few factories of her own, and her contractors were suspected of being bribed by Germany ; her only ports are on the Black Sea, and Archangel in the north ; but Archangel is always blocked with ice during the Winter ; and when Turkey entered the war no ships could get from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean.

The Russians, therefore, fell back through the Carpathians and Galicia ; they were driven across the River San, and Jaroslavl, which they had held since September 1914, was captured ; and in June Przemysl again fell into the hands of the Germans.

**Warsaw.**

In October the German commander, von Hindenburg, attempted to relieve the pressure on the two German wings and himself attacked in the centre, in Poland. The Germans advanced slowly but surely, and by Oct. 16th they were within a few miles of Warsaw. The battle for Warsaw and the line of the River Vistula, on which Warsaw is situated, lasted until Oct 19th, by which date the Germans had been defeated and driven back. But not only did the Russians check the Germans; they in their turn advanced and drove the Germans back towards Posen, which is in German Poland. The Germans made a second attack on Warsaw in December, but this again proved a failure; and a third attack was made in February 1915. This was no more successful than the other two attacks. For the next two or three months little of importance happened on this central front; the Germans were attempting to drive back the Russians on the two wings, that is to say, in Eastern Prussia and in Galicia, while the Russians were content with holding the Germans where they were and not themselves attempting to advance; for if they did so they would make their line very much longer, and it would require many more men to hold it. Also they were waiting for munitions to reach them by way of Archangel, and from Japan by way of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

*From June 1915 Onwards*

It will be seen, then, that by the middle of 1915, the Russian line ran almost straight from North to South—

from near Tilsit on the frontier of Eastern Prussia, through Warsaw, where there was a large salient, and then along the line of the River San to the Carpathians. This was a short straight line, and it was therefore thought that it would be easy to hold. But if it was necessary to retreat, the Russians trusted that their retreats would again, as before, prove successes. From this point forward, the Russian part of the war can be studied as one, and not as three separate campaigns.

After the Germans had re-taken Przemysl the next fortress to be attacked was the very important town of Lemberg. To take Lemberg it was first necessary to force the passage of the River Dniester, and General von Mackensen, the German commander in the south, actually crossed the river three days after Przemysl had been captured. At first his forces were driven back with terrible losses, but by the middle of June von Mackensen attacked at several points of his line, drove back the Russians, and on June 22nd Lemberg fell. Next week the Germans and Austrians attacked further north, and advanced towards Warsaw, taking a large number of guns. The capture of these must have been a great blow to Russia, for she was very short of heavy cannon and machine-guns. However, it was not until Przasnysz had fallen that any very great advance was made here, and meanwhile the Austrians lost very heavily in men.

### **Warsaw evacuated.**

By the time Przasnysz fell the Germans had advanced in the north into the Russian province of Courland in the direction of Riga, while further south, in the Warsaw salient, the Austrians very shortly took Radom. Early

in August Warsaw itself was evacuated by the Russians. But when the Germans entered it they found it almost deserted. Before the war the city had contained as many as 900,000 inhabitants; but when the Germans arrived, they found only sufficient men to hold the place for a few days. The Russians had again begun an orderly retreat, hoping that, as before, they would be able to lead the Germans on and on, until they were cut off from their sources of supplies, and that they would be able to repeat their successes on the Niemen in September and on the Vistula in November. They were also somewhat comforted by the fact that they had been able still further to straighten their line.

The capture of Warsaw had cost the Germans and Austrians much in the way of men, munitions, and money, but it was, at least, an advance; and from now forwards they began to carry the war into the enemy's country, whereas up to now Russia proper had been free from her enemies.

### **Kovno and Brest.**

The next aim of the Germans was the strong fortresses of Brest Litovsk (which was threatened by three armies from the North, the West, and the South), and of Kovno, in the south of Courland. Kovno was one of the strongest fortresses in Europe, but against it von Hindenburg brought such enormous siege guns that in time he was certain to be able to break down any fortress at all. The only chance which the Russians had was that they should be able to answer the German artillery with their own artillery; but this they could not do, because they were short of ammunition, and on the

17th of August Kovno fell. Its loss was a terrible blow to the Russians, for they had wished to defend themselves on the line of the River Niemen in the North, and on the River Bug in the South, or rather in the Centre. When Kovno fell, the Russians had to retreat to behind the Niemen, and also had to abandon the line of defence on the Bug, because if they continued to hold that line they could be attacked from the North. The result, naturally, was the fall of the other great fortress, Brest Litovsk, and also of the important fort of Novo Georgievsk, which is just north of Warsaw. Here the Russians left a force of 25,000 men—a very small garrison to hold such an important place against the 200,000 Germans who were attacking it, and indeed had already practically surrounded it. Their intention was to put in enough men to hold the Germans there as long as possible, and so prevent these siege troops from being used elsewhere. Novo Georgievsk fell at the end of August, and shortly afterwards Brest Litovsk.

### **The German Advance.**

The Germans continued to advance, but as they advanced the Russians retreated before them in perfect order, and no great battle ever took place between the two armies. The Germans wished for some great general engagement which should be decisive: the Russian Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Nicholas, was equally determined that there should be no such general engagement. He hoped that the Germans would continue to advance at great expense of men until they could advance no further, then when the time came the Russians would attack and the Germans would be unable to retreat.

### **The Czar takes Command.**

The next German advance was against the fortresses of Vilna and Grodno ; and at the same time an attack was made in the far south, the object being Rovno, which commands the only railway across the Pripet Marshes through Pinsk to Vilna. Unless they held the railway the Germans could not possibly advance further. In September the danger to Russia seemed so great, and the Russian Nation seemed so much to need encouragement, that several important changes were made in the leaders. The Czar himself took the supreme command, while the Grand Duke Nicholas, who had fought so brilliantly, became commander of the Russian forces fighting the Turks in the Caucasus. Whether the change was a good one, is doubtful, but it was made to encourage the Russian people, for the Czar was known as the " Little Father " of his people, and in a national crisis it is the duty of a father to look after his children. How the treacherous children treated their father will be seen later.

### **Vilna.**

On Sept 2nd the Germans succeeded in taking Grodno, and the Russian line was pushed back towards Vilna. Here the Germans made a last great effort to outflank, or surround the Russian armies ; on Sept. 18th Vilna fell, and it seemed that all Courland, with its capital, Riga, would shortly fall, and that the way would be open to Petrograd itself. However, the German advance could not continue further ; for in the south, in Galicia, Generals Ivanov and Brusilov had, with the greatest skill, succeeded in driving back the German and Austrian



forces, and indeed even threatened them with disaster ; for in the first half of September no less than 40,000 German prisoners were taken in Galicia.

By the end of 1915 the Russian line ran from the Gulf of Riga along the Dvina to Dvinsk, thence south to about 50 miles east of Vilna, then across the Pripet Marshes to Rovno, and south to the borders of Roumania, a country which was still neutral, although the Allies hoped that she would shortly join them. The Russian line was really cut into two parts by the Pripet Marshes, because the Germans held the only railway which ran through this part of the country. On the other hand, the Pripet Marshes themselves made any advance on the part of the Germans, if not impossible, at least extremely difficult.

### **A Russian Offensive.**

Nothing of importance occurred during the first half of 1916, but in the early summer a powerful Russian offensive was carried out. The Germans were fully occupied in their fruitless attacks on Verdun, while the Austrians were having great trouble in defending themselves against the Italians. There seemed an opportunity for a great Russian attack.

The part of the front chosen by them was the South front between the Pripet Marshes and the Roumanian frontier. The attack began on June 4th, and was carried out on the same principles as the battle of Neuve Chapelle on the Western Front. The Russians advanced with the greatest success at two particular points, the first between Rovno and Kovel, the second between Rovno and Lemberg. Much further south

and almost on the Roumanian border they captured, on June 17th, the city of Czernovitz, and quickly obtained control of the stretch of country known as the Bukovina. By the end of July, when the first offensive ceased, they had taken as many as 217,000 Austrian prisoners, and there seemed to be a danger of the Austro-German line being outflanked. The Russian soldiers, as before, fought splendidly, and their leaders showed the greatest skill and bravery. Their chief commander on this front was General Brusilov, who was, perhaps, the ablest of all the Russian generals, and who was adored by his men.

The second phase of the Russian offensive started in July—but now the advance was not so rapid. The reason was the same cause which had hindered them before, their lack of guns and of munitions, and the absence of good means of communication. However, they made up for this want to some extent by their personal bravery and their skill. By August they had advanced well into Galicia and into the Bukovina, but they could go no further. Their chief success was the capture of Brody, an important point on the railway between Rovno and Lemberg; but what was equally important, and indeed more important than the mere winning of territory, was the amount of the losses in men and guns which they inflicted upon the Austrians and Germans. They had taken over 350,000 prisoners, and at least a million of the enemy had been put out of action.

### **Roumania Joins the Allies.**

At the end of August Roumania entered the war on the side of the Allies, and the Eastern position was con-

siderably altered, for very soon Russia was obliged to send help to Roumania in the region near the mouth of the Danube and to the south of it. The campaign in Roumania will be dealt with in a later chapter. Meanwhile, in the Autumn of 1916, Brusilov's attack gradually died down, and during the Winter months of 1916 there was nothing of importance.

In January 1917, since the Roumanian situation was becoming critical, the Northern Russian army, which was a short distance from Riga, attempted to make a diversion by attacking the Germans on a broad front. A certain amount of success was obtained, but this was the last occasion on which Russia was able to help her Allies, and from this point onwards she was occupied by troubles of her own (troubles of which Germany took full advantage, and for which she was partly responsible).

### **The Crisis in Russia.**

By the Spring of 1917 it was quite clear that a crisis was approaching. Food was scarce all over Russia: the Government had the control of all the wheat and the bread, and it was thought that there were large private supplies which were being kept from the public. There undoubtedly was a great deal of corruption and bribery among the higher officials, and at the Imperial Court, indeed, even among members of the Imperial family, there was a great deal of pro-Germanism. It was now, when there was the greatest need of Men and Rulers, that those who could have saved Russia, failed her. Those who were loyal and honest were either too weak, or were leaders in a military and not a political sense; while the men of ability and intellect were

traitors and dishonest. Being without leaders, the lower classes of the people, the workmen and peasants, went mad, and by the beginning of March Petrograd was in a state of anarchy. The ordinary uneducated artisan knew that something was wrong somewhere—he did not know what—and he trusted nobody, and he felt that nothing could be worse than the existing state of affairs.

### **The Russian Republic.**

By March 15th the leaders of the old Government had been imprisoned, and the Czar, who had desired nothing but the good of his people, but had always been changing his advisers and was too weak to make up his mind, was forced to abdicate. The Crown was offered to the Czar's uncle, the Grand Duke Michael, but he refused it, and a Republic was established—at least was established as far as any form of government existed at all in Russia. The immediate power lay in the hands of the mechanics and the various workmen who were employed in factories and workshops. These people formed themselves into local committees, called Soviets, the ostensible purpose of which was to preserve law and order. Among the Soviets there now sprang up two conflicting parties, called the Menshevists and Bolsheviks.

### **Bolshevics.**

The former were socialists, and believed that no one class should have political power rather than any other, although they believed that, since all human achievements are the products of man's manual labour, those who work with their hands should have the last word in the destinies of their country. The latter, who were mechanics,

working with their hands only, and not with their brains, believed in themselves alone: they despised brains, as many silly people have always done: they believed that ignorance and force were better than intelligence they did not love their country, in fact they did not believe that anyone could belong to a country: they did not believe their friends, for they had no friends, and desired no friends, except themselves. everything that any real man values, such as honour, and duty, and self-sacrifice, was nothing to them. They had no honour, no sense of duty, and if there was to be any sacrifice, it was not themselves that would be sacrificed. Unhappily for Russia, and unhappily for the whole world, the Bolshevics triumphed. They made government in Russia impossible, and for a long time they prevented the triumph of the Allies.

### **Russia's Collapse.**

The immediate result of the Revolution was that all hostilities ceased on the Russian front. Many of the troops were true to themselves, their friends, and their country, and the army commanders, particularly General Brusilov, strove hard to maintain their successes, for, had Russia been true to herself, it is certain that the Germans and Austrians on the Eastern Front would have been so hampered, that an early victory for the Allies in the West would have been assured. As it was, Russia crumbled, like a building which has been too long out of repair: she ceased to be a protection, and became a threat.

The Germans, in the course of the war, made many mistakes, but they made no mistake with regard to

Russia. They saw that Russia was her own worst friend, and allowed her to do as she pleased. They helped the Bolshevics, knowing that the Bolshevics were Russia's worst enemy. In consequence, from March, 1917, Russia ceased to be one of the Allies, and ceased to take any further important part in the war.

## CHAPTER XV.

### Serbia and the Balkan States.

AUSTRIA began operations against Serbia by bombarding Belgrade. The Serbians moved the Government to Nish, which is on the railway between Belgrade and Sofia. The Austrians, after several attempts, crossed the Save and the Drina, and took the town of Shabatz. This was all they were able to do, however, and by the end of August they were driven out of Serbia. They had their hands sufficiently occupied by the Russian advance in Galicia, and there evidently was no particular advantage at the moment in advancing into Serbia, at least until they could obtain Allies to assist them.

The first of the Balkan nations to take sides was Turkey. The Turks had always been good friends of Great Britain, and in the Crimean War of 1854-1856 the English and French had fought as Turkey's ally. But the Turks and the Russians had always been enemies, and German influence had for years been strong in Turkey. The Turkish army had been organised and staffed by German officers, and the real Turkish Commander-in-Chief was the Chief of Staff, the German Liman von Sanders.

**Eastern Policy of Germany.**

At first sight there does not appear to be any strong reason why Germany should seek an alliance with so distant a country as Turkey ; but the real reason was this. Germany had already become a European power : she wished to become a World Power. The Turkish Empire was extensive · it stretched from Adrianople to the Persian Gulf on the one hand, and to the Caspian Sea on the other. The Sultan of Turkey was nominally the Ruler, or Over-Lord of Egypt ; and Turkey held the central shrines of Islam, the Mosque of S. Sofia in Constantinople, and the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina in Arabia Further, German capital had built railroads in Asiatic Turkey, and the German Government hoped that these railroads would open up an unexplored country in Asia Minor, and would be able to connect Constantinople with the important cities of Baghdad and Basrah. If, therefore, Germany had Turkey as an ally, she could do two things : (1) she could extend her influence outside Europe and could eventually obtain control of the Persian Gulf, or at least obtain all the carrying trade into the East, and so might, with her railways, take the place of the ancient caravan routes to Persia, India, and China ; and (2) she could, by means of Turkey, become a great power in the Mohammedan world, and might be able to use the great Mohammedan countries, Egypt, Persia, and particularly India, for her own ends. She had no love for Mohammedans and, unlike the British, she had no respect for their religion or their sacred places ; but she thought that Islam would be useful to her in her World Domination.

She made another mistake.



### **Balkan Politics.**

The part played by Turkey in the Great War will be considered later : for Turkey took very little part in the Balkan campaigns ; but it must be remembered that from the very start Germany hoped to build up an immense Empire, reaching from the North Sea to the Indian Ocean, and she hoped that Turkey and Bulgaria (of which we shall hear later) would be tools in her hands, and that by means of these tools she would be able to carve a way to the East for herself and at the same time strike a blow at her greatest enemy, the British Empire.

When Turkey came into the war there was evidently a great danger to Serbia—for Serbia lay on the main route between Vienna and Constantinople—and between her capital and Constantinople lay Bulgaria, a country whose honesty was always a doubtful quantity. It seemed quite likely that if Serbia could be crushed, Bulgaria might either be bullied or else persuaded to allow German and Austrian troops to pass along the two great highways, the Danube and the Balkan railway. Here, as elsewhere, we can see the extraordinary advantage which the Central Powers possessed—namely, the fact that they *were* Central. From Germany to Austria, from Austria through a conquered Serbia, and thence through Bulgaria to Turkey, was an easy progress : it was not so easy to connect Russia with France, England or Italy.

### **Diplomatic Moves.**

Austria's first move, after Turkey joined her, was to invade Serbia. Her second and third attempts to do so were, however, no more successful than her first.

The Austrian troops penetrated Serbia as far as Valjevo, but in December they were driven across the Save and Drina with great loss, and the Serbian Government returned to Belgrade. During the Spring and Summer of 1915 nothing of any importance happened in the Balkans. Austria was occupied with Russia and with Italy, who came into the war in May; but if there was no fighting, the Diplomats of the various Powers were busy, and negotiations were constantly going on. It had been hoped that Roumania would join the Allies, but the country was by no means united, and there were considerable political troubles and the failure of Russia, combined with the inability of the Allies to assist her with troops or munitions, prevented her from joining them. Greece also remained neutral. The Prime Minister, M. Venizelos, and a large number of the public, and certainly part of the army, wished to join the Allies, if 150,000 troops could be sent to Greece; but the Gallipoli disaster (*see later*) prevented the Allies from sending any more troops to the East, and also King Constantine of Greece, who was a brother-in-law of the Kaiser, was very strongly pro-German in his sympathies, and for the time being Greece remained neutral. Bulgaria, during the summer, negotiated with Serbia, and claiming certain territory as her due after the Balkan War, hinted that if Serbia would satisfy her claims, she might assist Serbia against Austria. In reality she meant to do nothing of the sort, for King Ferdinand of Bulgaria had in July made a secret treaty with Germany, by which, it is said, Bulgaria was promised Constantinople. Serbia suspected the good faith of Bulgaria and refused to negotiate with her.

**Bulgaria mobilizes.**

Bulgaria mobilized her army in September, and Serbia found herself in danger of invasion from the North and the East. She appealed to the Allies for help, and two divisions, one French and one British, under the command of General Sarraill, who had defended Verdun in 1914, were landed at Salonika in Greece in October, and advanced along the River Vardar into Bulgarian territory ; but they had arrived too late to be of any real help, they were not in sufficient numbers, and they could not get into touch with the Serbian army. They re-crossed the Bulgarian frontier and encamped in and round Salonika, which was intended to be a rallying ground and a last place of resistance for the Serbian army. The Greek Government protested against their territory being thus occupied, but their protest was, and was intended to be, merely formal, and a large number of Greeks were actually doing all they could to help the Allies.

**Serbia Invaded.**

Meanwhile, two German armies had appeared on the Danube, commanded by von Mackensen, who had before been fighting in Russia. Two Bulgarian armies simultaneously attacked the Eastern frontier. Serbia was left entirely alone, except for a British Naval Brigade of gunboats and smaller ships, under Admiral Troubridge, which had been doing splendid work on the Danube. So small a force could not hold the river against two German armies, and on October 9th, after a heavy bombardment, Belgrade was evacuated. The Austrians attacked from the West, the

Germans from the North. and the Bulgarians from the South-east, and the Serbians were forced to retreat to the hills in the South-west. Uskub fell on October 22nd to the Bulgarians, on the 30th the Germans took Kragujevatz, which was the only arsenal in Serbia, and where all her guns and munitions were manufactured, and early in November the Bulgarians took Nish. More than half of Serbia was now in the hands of the enemy, and the Serbian army was in full flight, no man knowing where he was going, and each trying, as best he could, to save himself. Serbia was over-run as Belgium had been over-run in 1914. The country was evacuated not only by the soldiers, but by the civil inhabitants. The sufferings of these wretched people in the mountains in the depth of winter were beyond description. Some few of the scattered bands made their way through Albania to the Adriatic Sea, and as many as 100,000 soldiers were finally collected and sent to join the French camp at Salonika. But for practical purposes the country of Serbia, and with it her little mountain neighbour, Montenegro, had been wiped off the map.

### Salonica.

It now became a question whether there was any advantage in the French and British troops remaining at Salonika: the Allies' objects were undefined, but it seemed better to maintain a force there and to await developments. The troops therefore remained outside Salonika throughout the winter, the Serbians on the Left, the French in the Centre, and the British on the Right.

**Greece Hesitates.**

In May, the Bulgarians marched south and seized some Greek forts in Macedonia, thereby violating Greek neutrality. The Bulgarians alleged that the neutrality of Greece had already been violated when the Allies landed their troops at Salonika, but the case was really quite different. By a treaty, signed in 1830, England, France, and Russia were made protectors and guardians of Greece, and under this treaty they had a right to enter Greece if all three Powers were agreed on doing so. Bulgaria's action, on the other hand, was the same as the violation of Luxembourg by Germany, and was just as unjustifiable. Venizelos wished to declare war on Bulgaria at once, but he was no longer Prime Minister, and his party was not in power. The Allies would have welcomed Greece as an ally, but they had no desire to force her to fight, although they wished to prevent King Constantine from helping Germany. Greece therefore still remained neutral, and the Greek army was divided into two sections, the "loyalists" who followed the King, and the "patriots" who followed Venizelos and wished to make war on Bulgaria.

In August, the Bulgarians attacked all along the Allied line. On the West they crossed the Greek frontier and occupied some territory; while to the East they occupied the town of Kavalla, where there were three Greek divisions guarding the place. Two of these at once went over and joined the Bulgarians, while the third joined the Allies at Salonika. In the autumn, General Milne, with the British, attacked the Bulgarians and drove them back over the River Struma. But the chief

success was on the West, where the French, assisted by Russian troops and what was left of the Serbian army, recaptured the city of Monastir on November 19th, 1916.

Greece was now in a state of civil war, or anarchy, and Allied troops were landed at Athens to keep order. King Constantine, still undecided, retired to the Morea (the S. Peninsula of Greece) with his "loyalists," while the rest of the army joined Venizelos and the Allies at Salonika.

### **Roumania.**

During this confused state of affairs in the Balkans, another Power had entered the war. This was Roumania, which had always been a peace-loving state, and had avoided being drawn into the Balkan War of 1908. Following the example of Italy, Roumania claimed that a large part of Transylvania was really Roumanian, although it was nominally part of the Austrian Empire; and on August 27th, war was declared on Austria.

The Roumanians' successes in the first few weeks were amazing: they invaded Transylvania at several points, and it seemed that they might be able to pass triumphantly through Hungary, and eventually threaten Vienna itself. Their triumph, however, was short-lived. A large Austro-German army, under von Falkenhayn, suddenly appeared at Hermanstadt, in Transylvania, and in October the Roumanians were driven back to the frontier.

Worse was to follow. While von Falkenhayn was pressing back the Roumanians on the West and North, von Mackensen, having finished with Serbia, attacked them in the South, in the region known as the Dobrudja, a triangular stretch of country which lies between the

Danube and the Black Sea. With a composite army of Turks, Germans, and Bulgarians, he drove back the Roumanians in a northerly direction, and Constanza, the important harbour, was abandoned on October 22nd. After this, he was temporarily checked by the arrival of a Russian army, under General Sakharoff.

### Wallachia over-run.

In November, von Falkenhayn forced the passes and began to over-run the plains of Wallachia. VonMackensen simultaneously crossed the Danube at various points, and by the beginning of December the Roumanians were forced to evacuate Bucharest. The Government was moved to Jassy, in the province of Moldavia. By the end of the year, the whole of Wallachia was in the hands of the enemy, and Roumania had gone the way of Belgium and of Serbia. In 1917 came the Russian Revolution, which destroyed any chance that Roumania ever had of driving out the Germans ; for, relying on Russian help in the Spring, General Averescu attacked the Germans in Southern Moldavia and advanced 12 miles ; but when he had done this he was deserted by the Russians, who simply ran away and left him. The Roumanians, however, were brave fighters and, just as the Belgians managed to keep one corner of their country inviolate, so the Germans could not advance further in Moldavia ; and, indeed, fighting was at a standstill until March 1918, when Roumania, out of the reach of any of her allies, and deserted by Russia, was forced to sign a peace, by which she gave Roumania to Bulgaria, disbanded her army, and placed at the disposal of Germany all her corn and oil.

The history of Roumania is a tragedy : she had come into the war to free Transylvania, and she found herself the victim of Russian treachery.

### Greece.

To return to Greece. The Allied armies at Salonika had been increased, but no advance could be made. All that could be done was to keep Bulgaria in check and watch events in Greece : in fact, General Sarrail issued orders that no offensive should be started. It seems that the supply of munitions was insufficient, and the country through which an advance would be made was very difficult country for fighting ; and, further, the troops were suffering from malaria. In June, however, there were developments. King Constantine, who for long had been playing a double game, was forced to abdicate, and his throne was occupied by his second son, Prince Alexander. M. Venizelos at the same time became Prime Minister, and Greece at last came into the war with the Allies. Nothing, however, was done for a long time, because the Allies were occupied elsewhere and Russia's failure had caused great anxiety on the Western Front and in Italy, and no reserves were available for what was, really, a "side-show." Preparations were, however, being made with the intention of striking when the opportunity came. The opportunity was long in coming, but at last in September 1918 General Franchet D'Espérey, who in 1914 had taken a great part in the battle of the Marne, and was now Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces in the Balkans, delivered a sudden and quite unexpected attack on a wide front and won the first "final" victory of the war.



**Allied Successes.**

On September 15th the French and Serbians attacked east of Monastir: they drove the Bulgarians from their prepared positions, and in five days advanced 15 miles. Advancing now with great rapidity, the Serbians reached the River Vardar, north-east of Monastir, while their cavalry advanced towards the city of Uskub. Meanwhile the British and Greeks further east had also advanced rapidly and successfully and, invading Bulgaria, occupied Strumnitza. The British and Serbian cavalry now joined forces and cut off the Bulgarians' retreat in the direction of Uskub. By the end of September, the entire Bulgarian army was in full retreat, the line was broken in two places, and they were in danger of being cut off by sections and forced to surrender in detachments. A complete disaster was imminent, and a Bulgarian mission was sent to General D'Espérey offering an unconditional surrender.

The terms imposed by the Allies were the complete demobilization of the Bulgarian army, the evacuation of Serbia, and a right of passage for the Allies through Bulgaria to the Danube.

**Turkey Isolated.**

The surrender of Bulgaria was a great disaster to the Central Powers; for not only were Franchet D'Espérey's armies free for other fronts, but Turkey was now cut off, and would soon be attacked from all sides, and it was therefore almost certain that Turkey would shortly give in, and all the troops in Palestine and Mesopotamia would be available for an attack on Germany and Austria. The Serbians and French reached Nish about the middle

of October, and in November they had recaptured Belgrade and crossed the Danube into Hungary. Meanwhile, the Second Serbian army, together with troops from Bosnia and Herzegovina (which had been Austrian



territory) invaded Bosnia. Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro now joined Serbia, and a "greater Serbia" was proclaimed at Serajevo, and the part played by Serbia in the war terminated at the place where it had begun.

## PART V

### CHAPTER XVI.

#### Italy.

ITALY, the last of the Great European Powers to enter the war, did so on May 23rd, 1915, when she declared war on Austria. That she did so, seems, at first sight, strange ; for, many years before, she had joined a Triple Alliance of herself, Austria, and Germany. This Alliance was, however, more apparent than real, for the Italians and the Austrians had, for centuries, been enemies ; while, on the other hand, England and Italy had always been the best of friends. There were, moreover, other reasons why Italy should change her policy. When, in 1870, Italy had won her independence and had become one united kingdom, there were still parts of what was really Italian territory which remained in the hands of Austria. The country called the Trentino (from the important city of Trent) and the lands on the Eastern shore of the Gulf of Venice (including the important cities of Trieste, Fiume, and Pola, were inhabited almost exclusively by Italians, but were part of the Austrian Empire. Italy,

therefore, finding that the Allies were fighting for Freedom and for what has been called the "Self-determination" of small nations, determined to give them her help, so that she might obtain freedom and independence for her own kinsmen in Austria, and might assist in the liberation of the other oppressed countries, Serbia, Poland, and Belgium.

### **Italy's Difficulties.**

From the very beginning, Italy's difficulties were very great. The front on which she had to face the Austrians was semi-circular in shape, and no less than 480 miles long, while almost the whole of it lay among rugged and almost insurmountable mountains. Again, at the time when she entered the war, the Russians were being driven back to the River San, and in the West the British had suffered terribly at Ypres and the shortage of ammunition was being strongly felt, while in the East the Dardanelles expedition had proved a failure. She had, therefore, to fight entirely by herself, and without hope of immediate help from her allies.

Italy had an Army of 600,000 men actually ready, and a reserve of over two million men in the Territorial Militia, who, however, were not sufficiently trained for immediate fighting. She also had a small but efficient Navy. It contained four Dreadnoughts, and two more almost completed, and a large number of older and smaller vessels, intended chiefly to guard her long coast-line and to control the Adriatic Sea.

### **Italian Achievements.**

At first, the Austrians remained on the defensive, and the first attack, made by General Cadorna, the Italian

Commander-in-Chief, was made in the direction of the city of Gorizia, with the intention of seizing the important railway junction and the River Isonzo, as a first step towards the capture of Trieste. But, at the same time, they attacked in the Trentino, to prevent the Austrians from sending reinforcements to the line of the Isonzo. Their advance was, at first, rapid, and by the middle of June they had captured the fort of Monfalcone and had crossed the Isonzo at Plava and defeated the Austrians in the first battle of the Isonzo (July 2nd); but by the middle of August they were checked, and could advance no further.

Meanwhile, in the mountains in the Centre and on her Left front she had been fighting, more or less successfully, a war of defence, and had prevented the Austrians from over-running the rich plains of Lombardy. For months now the situation changed very little: in the Autumn and Winter the soldiers in the Trentino suffered most terribly from cold and hunger, but they continued bravely, and the record of their fighting is a story of continued endurance and enterprise. Particularly wonderful was the work done by the "Alpini," the Italian mountaineer soldiers. They played with the mountains as children play at hide and seek in a wood. They scaled vast heights as if they were mere rocks, and dropped down suddenly upon the Austrians like birds from the sky. They carried their cannons to the tops of immense snow-capped hills, and when they could not scale the mountains they blew the tops to pieces with their explosives.

All through the Winter of 1915 and the Spring of 1916 nothing of importance occurred on this front, but in May 1916 the Austrians, encouraged by the success against

Russia, began an attack in Italy which they hoped would prove decisive, just as the Germans hoped to obtain a decisive victory at Verdun.

### **The Austrian Attack.**

The Italian front at this time may be divided into three portions - (1) The Trentino front, running eastward along the Venetian Alps from Lake Garda ; (2) the Carnic front, east of the Trentino in the Carnic Alps, and likewise running from West to East ; and (3) the Isonzo front, running North from the sea near Monfalcone. The Austrians now attacked with half-a-million men and nearly 2500 guns, some of them the biggest guns used during the war, on the Trentino front. Their object was to force their way due south into the plains of Venetia, and so take the Italian armies on the other two fronts in the rear. The Italian front in the Trentino was held by the Italian First Army, the commander of which was hardly aware of the seriousness of the Austrian attack and did not make proper preparations to meet it. So, therefore, when on May 14th the Austrians attacked on a front of 30 miles with more than 2000 guns, of which half at least were heavy guns and many were 15-inch guns from battleships, the Italian Centre was at once driven back. After five days' fierce fighting, the Austrians advanced about three miles, and by the end of May they had cleared the Italians out of Austria, and had advanced into Italy and captured two important railway positions, Arsiero and Asiago. For some days fighting of the most desperate nature followed, and it was feared that the beautiful city of Verona would have to be evacuated ; but, finally, in the last days of June, the Austrian attack was stopped

and they were actually forced to retreat to near the frontier.

### **Cadorna advances.**

The Austrian attack had failed in its main object, but it had prevented the Italians from advancing towards Trieste ; still, General Cadorna was determined to press on towards the East. He had made the most careful plans for his advance, and a considerable amount of munitions and heavy guns had been collected, and the Austrian attack in the Trentino had merely " altered the time-table." By a brilliant piece of strategy, he attacked the south of the Austrian line on August 4th, but this was merely a " feint," his real object being the town of Gorizia, which he captured on August 9th, taking no less than 12,000 prisoners. The fighting continued all through the Summer and the Autumn, and it was hoped that Trieste might fall before the end of the year, but the Austrian defence was stubborn and the country, particularly the Carso plateau, was terribly difficult to fight over, being rocky and barren. The Italians advanced, but they advanced slowly, and all hopes of taking Trieste before 1917 were destroyed by the torrential rains which fell in November and December.

During the early months of 1917 there were a number of small engagements all along the Italian front, but there was no movement of any importance. Both sides were preparing for an offensive on a big scale, and on May 12th the Italians attacked in great force near Gorizia. By the 15th they had gained a footing on the Bainsizza plateau. The Austrians counter-attacked between the 16th and 22nd, but without success, and at the end of the first

stage of the attack Cadorna had taken 7,000 prisoners, 18 guns, and a large number of trench mortars and machine guns. The second stage of the offensive, from May 23rd to May 30th, was further to the south, and was likewise successful—over 16,000 prisoners were taken and a large quantity of stores. The Austrians, who were now able to bring troops from the Russian front, where there was now no real fighting, and in June made a powerful counter-attack. They made some progress, but at a heavy cost and by the use of large reserves of men.

### **Italy's Insecurity.**

By the middle of 1917, then, Cadorna was able to congratulate himself on a very solid success at all points. He had successfully met the great offensive of May 1916 in the Trentino: he had kept the enemy from Italian soil: he had strengthened his flanks and had almost opened the way to Trieste. This, however, was his last success, and for the several months the position was one of great difficulty. He had a terribly long front to guard, and he could not obtain help from the Allies, for General Haig was planning his great attack in Flanders, while Pétain was keeping his men back with the intention of an attack at Verdun; and it was pretty certain that if the war was to be won it would be won on the Western Front. On the other hand, by now Russia was worse than useless as an ally, and the Austrians and Germans were able to move whole armies from the Eastern Front. What was even worse was that among the Italians themselves there were a very large number of persons who wished for peace at any price, and an even larger who had been bribed by German agents to become traitors to the country and to the Allied



Cause. Cadorna attempted to advance on the Bainsizza plateau, but, though he was at first successful and his men at San Gabriele showed the greatest heroism and bravery, he saw that he could not obtain any decisive success, and by the end of September he had to cease attacking and remain on the defensive. Meanwhile, the work of the Austrian and German agents was beginning to produce results. In August, there were serious riots in Turin, and even some of the troops mutinied, and all over the country there was a feeling of doubt and insecurity.

### **The Line broken.**

That these feelings were justified was soon seen. On October 24th the Germans, who had taken over the command of the Austrian forces, commenced what proved to be a more formidable attack than that of May 1916, and which was very nearly a disaster to the Italian people, and, indeed, to the whole Allied cause. Between October 24th and 28th, the enemy drove the Italians from the Bainsizza plateau and were advancing across the Isonzo like a river in flood. The Italian line was broken, and it was necessary for their armies to retreat as well as they could. Most of the Italian troops fought bravely, but certain troops in the Second Army were guilty of pure treachery, although, in his despatch, General Cadorna spoke merely of "insufficient resistance." The Italian headquarters were moved from Udine to Padua, and it became a question where the last line of defence should be, just as it had been in the great German offensive in 1914, which brought about the retreat from Mons. There were, in this case, four lines

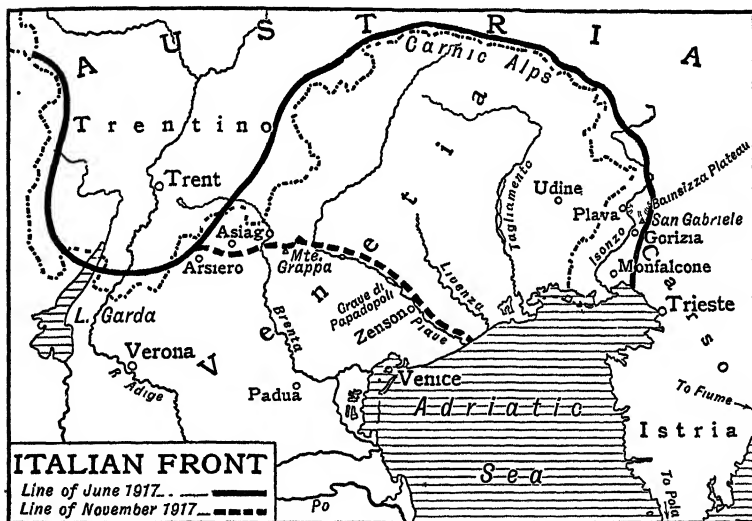
of rivers which could be defended: the Tagliamento, the Piave, the Brenta, and, last of all, the Adige. To have retreated to either of the last two would have been worse than a national disaster, for it would have involved the abandonment of the beautiful city of Venice to the Austrians and Germans, and one of the world's greatest wonders would have been in the hands of the world's worst criminals. Fortunately, that supreme disaster was avoided, but Italy was to face a disaster which was to cost her nearly a quarter of her whole army.

### **The Tagliamento.**

On October 29th, the Germans captured Udine, which had been the Italian G.H.Q. and was an immensely important railway junction. When it was taken, communications between the armies in the Carnic Alps and those further South and East were cut. The troops, therefore, from the Trentino and the Carnic Alps at once began to retreat, in order to be able to re-establish communications with the Isonzo troops. On October 31st the Austrians reached the Tagliamento, and it became clear that the situation was as serious as had been the situation on the Western front after the battle of Mons. The Second Italian Army, under General Capello, had practically disappeared. Those that had not run away had been killed. The Third Army, under the Duke of Aosta, had only just managed to retire from the Carso plateau to the river, and had done so by a display of the highest bravery and courage, which had prevented their retreat from becoming a panic or a rout. But, when they crossed the river, they lost their rearmost divisions, and as many as 500 guns of various sizes. The enemy claimed to have taken 200,000

prisoners and 1800 guns, and it is quite likely that the claim was not much exaggerated.

At the Tagliamento there was a pause, for the speed of the attack had carried the Austrians and Germans far beyond their heavy guns, which, naturally, took a long time to move, and also the Tagliamento, which at points



is almost a mile across, was in flood. However, it was impossible for the Italians to remain there, because in the dry season the river breaks up into a large number of small streams, which are easily fordable; besides, the Austrians had the control of the railways behind the line of the river and so could turn the flank of the Italians.

The question was whether the Italians should retire to the Adige or to the Piave. But to retire to the Adige

meant to surrender Venice. Not only was this course unthinkable to the Italian people, but, if it were taken, it meant that Italy would have to give up her control of the Adriatic Sea. The Austrian fleet was then shut up in the harbour of Pola and behind the islands of Dalmatia, but, if Venice were taken, the battleships and submarines would be free to come out.

### **The Piave.**

Then, the line of the Piave was no easy one to hold. It has been said that it was a line "strong only towards its mouth, weak in the centre, and no line at all in its upper glens." The northern armies on the Trentino and Carnic fronts had therefore to withdraw and concentrate as low down the river as they could. Cadorna, therefore (for the reasons stated), determined to take up this line, and by the 10th November he had successfully brought back all his troops behind the river, there to await the Germans and to turn upon them as Joffre waited at the Marne. Under the existing conditions and with the forces that he had, the retreat was a magnificent one, and it was destined later to turn into a triumph.

### **French and English help.**

France and England had not been able to help Cadorna earlier in the year, but now help was forthcoming. France sent a force, the Twelfth Army Corps, under General Fayolle, and England sent the Fourteenth Army Corps, under General Plumer, who had previously commanded the Second Army in Flanders. Moreover, a council of the representatives of the three Great Allied Powers met near Genoa to discuss the situation.

This conference, held on November 5th, is most important, for from it sprang the Council of Versailles, by means of which the war was won. The Council decided what part should be taken by each of the Allies in the whole war, and also that the operations on all the fronts should be considered together and not as separate enterprises. General Cadorna was transferred to Versailles in order that he might confer with the French and English military authorities, and with them discuss and organise the various operations on the different fronts, and his place was taken by General Diaz, who before had commanded the Twenty-third Italian Corps in the Carso battles. The Italian line now ran east from Lake Garda across the Asiago plateau until it met the Piave near Monte Grappa, from which point it followed the line of the river to the sea. The Second Italian Army had practically ceased to exist, and what was left of it was taken out of the fighting line. The First and Fifth armies faced the Trentino, and the Third and Fourth were on the line of the river.

### **The Line held.**

The Germans and Austrians were now attacking in both sections. On the Piave itself they succeeded in crossing the river at one point, a village named Zenson, but the great danger was from the North, where the Italians were driven back on the Asiago plateau. Clearly, if the line were broken here, the armies on the Piave would be forced to surrender bodily, or else retire across the Venetian Plain to the Adige. However, after some weeks of the most desperate fighting, the Italians held the line, their strongest position being Monte Grappa,

which dominated the other peaks ; and, helped by their French and English reinforcements, the line was held securely through the Winter and the Spring of 1918.

In March 1918 a slight re-arrangement was made in the lines, and the British force, now commanded by the Earl of Cavan, was moved to the Asiago plateau. It appeared certain that the Austrians would make their greatest effort on this part of the line, and the British and the best Italian troops were appointed to what was really the post of honour.

### **The Austrian Offensive.**

The Austrian offensive began in June, and on the 15th of the month an assault, in which no less than 70 divisions and 7,000 cannon were employed, began along the whole front ; and, as was anticipated, a particularly heavy attack was made on the Asiago. Here the British had to give way, but they retired to previously prepared positions, and to what are called " switch-lines," so that, when the Austrians advanced, they found themselves caught between two fires, and were forced to retire with very heavy losses of men and 200 guns. On the Piave itself the enemy crossed the river at several points, but was unable to hold his newly-won positions, for the rainy season had commenced and the Piave was soon in flood ; and on June 23rd General Diaz began his counter-offensive. The Austrians were driven back at every point, 20,000 prisoners were taken, and thousands of men were drowned in the deltas of the river. Austria's great offensive had proved a failure, and what had appeared to be a disaster for Italy was turned into a great victory.

### **The Italian Advance.**

In the Summer of 1918 there were startling developments on other fronts. On the West, the German advance was broken on July 18th, and the great Allied advance, which was to end the war, began in August. In September Bulgaria surrendered. In the same month General Allenby gained a crushing victory in Palestine, and the surrender of Turkey was expected every day. Early in October, therefore, a great Italian advance was planned. About this time certain changes were made in the Italian command, and Lord Cavan was paid the extraordinary compliment of being offered the command of an Italian Army. This was the tenth Italian army, which also contained the two British divisions formerly commanded by him. The first Italian move was the capture, on October 24th, of the large island in the Piave, known as Grave di Papadopoli. It was captured by two British battalions, under the command of an Italian officer. On the 26th the grand Italian attack began. The Eighth and Tenth armies crossed the Piave, and by the 30th the Austrians were in full flight and had fallen back as far as the River Livenza. By November 3rd the victorious Italians had reached the Tagliamento, while further north they drove the enemy back into the mountains and over the frontier, and even recovered the Trentino. This victory was certainly the worst disaster that either the Austrians or Germans suffered during the war, coming as it did after a series of Allied successes elsewhere, it was quite decisive in its results. The amount of ground covered and the number of troops engaged were so gigantic that it hardly seems correct to speak of it as a single battle. In eight days 300,000

Austrian and German prisoners had been taken, and no fewer than 5,000 guns. The Austrian Army had ceased to exist, for all that were left of it were flying in every direction, without order or hope.

### **The Break-up of Austro-Hungary.**

In the meanwhile, while the Austrian Army was being annihilated, the Austrian Empire was likewise disappearing. The Emperor Karl fled, and his chief minister, Count Tisza (who had been responsible for the war against Serbia), was shot dead. Hungary and Bohemia declared their independence. Galicia split up into two separate states, with capitals at Cracow and Lemberg. Bosnia and Herzegovina (which had been annexed by Austria in 1908) declared their independence, and joined their brother Slavs in Serbia and Montenegro. The Dual Monarchy was no more.

On November 4th, therefore, the Austrian commanders agreed to an Armistice, by which they agreed at once to disband their Army, to hand over the greater part of the Fleet, to evacuate all invaded territory, and to allow the Allies to use Austro-Hungarian territory, including the Danube, for the invasion of Germany.



## PART VI.

### OTHER FRONTS.

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#### CHAPTER XVII.

### The Campaigns in Africa.

OF three important "side-shows" in the Great War, the theatre is the Continent of Africa. Before the war, Germany held four tracts of country in Africa—German South-West Africa, German East Africa, Togoland, and the Cameroons. In all these countries, naturally, there was fighting, and there was also fighting in British South Africa, though not with Germans. We will deal with the last first.

Germany remembered that as short a time ago as 1902 we had been fighting with the Dutch colonists of South Africa, and, although since that time, a self-governing province of the British Empire had been established under the title of The Union of South Africa, it was impossible to calculate exactly how far South Africa would be loyal to the Empire. Germany certainly expected that South Africa would dissociate herself

from Great Britain ; and, whether or not before the war she had attempted to undermine the loyalty of the Union, she tried on the outbreak of war to foment a rebellion. She failed, as she failed elsewhere ; but early in the war there were two small outbreaks, which, had they not been dealt with promptly and effectively, might have proved costly and disastrous.

### **Botha and Smuts.**

Fortunately for the British Empire, we had two men at the head of affairs who were capable of facing any crisis, and who proved themselves as true friends in time of need as they had before shown themselves honourable foes. These were General Louis Botha and General Smuts. These two men, one the Prime Minister, the other the Commander of the Army, had fought against the British in the South African War, honourably and efficiently, and now they displayed that mixture of simplicity and sincerity which is part of the real South African character. With such men to guide events, the Empire had no fear.

### **Maritz.**

Early in October, the Commander in the North-West Province of the Union, Colonel Maritz, behaved in such a way as to arouse suspicion, and his services were dispensed with. Maritz immediately declared himself in favour of the Germans, and raised a rebellion in the north-west of Cape Colony. A force under Colonel Brits was sent against him, and he retired across the Orange River into German territory, from which he returned on a second venture. This time he was not merely beaten—he was crushed.



**de Wet.**

A more serious rising followed. Christian de Wet, who in the South African War of 1899-1902 had been the last of the Boer Generals to surrender, had for a long time been suspected of disloyalty, and he now openly took up arms against the Union, and raised a force of rebels in the Orange River Colony. His treacherous and foolhardy attempt was met by prompt action. General Botha at once raised a volunteer army and defeated the rebels early in November. De Wet himself escaped, and dodged about to and fro in the Orange River Colony, until, at last, on December 1st, what was left of his force was surrounded at Waterburg, and he himself was imprisoned.

With the capture of their leader, the revolt ended. The quickness with which General Botha acted, blinds the hearer of his exploits to the seriousness of the movement. In two months, 7,000 rebels were taken prisoner, while the total of the Union casualties was less than 400. To these prisoners General Botha showed no harshness. He knew that he had acted with such promptitude and such strength that no future trouble was probable; and from the actual ranks of the rebels he set himself to enlist men for the defence of the country and of British Possessions throughout the Continent.

**Togoland.**

In the west the first German colony to be dealt with successfully was Togoland. This colony being situated between Ashanti, which is British, and Dahomey, which is French, was in a somewhat unfortunate position. The Germans were not successful colonists, for they were

entirely lacking in common-sense and in sympathy ; and their hold on Togoland was so slight as almost to be negligible. On August 6th the colony was invaded from both sides. The capital, a city named Lome, was at once abandoned, and the Germans, with a number of native troops whom they had forced to fight on their side, retired to a place named Kamina, where they had a wireless station. They made great efforts to defend Kamina, but the native troops deserted them (an act which is not to be wondered at in view of the traditional German methods of dealing with coloured races), and in a very short time the Germans, having destroyed the wireless station, surrendered

### **The Cameroons.**

The liberation of the Cameroons was much slower. British forces entered the colony from Nigeria in the west in August, 1914, but were driven back over the border. In September, with the assistance of two gunboats, we captured the capital, Duala, and also some German merchant ships. The Germans now retired inland, and our troops immediately seized the railways, and the conquest of the Cameroons, enormous though the colony was, became only a matter of time. The actual length of the campaign was due to the frightful nature of the climate, the thickness of the jungles, and the size of the colony. In thick jungles the machine-gun is a most effective weapon, and it was upon the machine-gun that the Germans relied most. An attempt was made to advance into the interior of the country in the Spring of 1915, but the difficulties of transport prevented our troops from making any considerable advance until the

Summer rains put a stop to all operations. In October, 1915, General Dobell, who was in chief command, and who, later, served with distinction in Palestine, pushed forward towards the city of Yaunde, to which the Germans had retired. Yaunde is 150 miles inland, and the Allied troops advanced upon it from two directions and with two separate forces, one, the English, under Colonel Gorges, and the other, a French force, under Colonel Meyer. At the same time, other forces, French and English, converged upon the town, which surrendered on January 1st, 1916. By the middle of February the German forces had all surrendered or had left the country.

### **South-West Africa.**

The conquest of German South-West Africa was perhaps the most brilliant of all the lesser campaigns of the war. A glance at the map will show how vast this territory is, yet it was subdued in less than six months. The hero of South-West Africa was General Botha. Neither Botha, nor his able lieutenant, General Smuts, was dismayed by the vastness of a country 300,000 square miles in extent, nor by the difficulties which it, being barren and arid, presented. The Germans, early in the war, were driven from the coast, and concentrated their forces at Windhoek. Windhoek is reached by railway from Swakopmund, from which it is distant about 150 miles, and also from Luderitz Bay, further south. In September, 1914, we occupied Luderitz Bay, and in January, 1915, we seized Swakopmund; and since we held all the passes of the Orange River, which is the South and South-west frontier of the colony, we commanded all the gates of the country.

Botha attacked in two areas. He himself advanced from Swakopmund, while to the south a triple attack was organised. Colonels Mackenzie, Van der Venter, and Berrange advanced simultaneously from Luderitz Bay in the West, the Orange River in the South, and Bechuana-land in the East. In spite of the terribly difficult nature of the country, which is sandy and waterless, and liable to violent storms, these three columns pushed forward until they met at a village called Gibeon. The difficulties of transport had been frightful, Colonel Berrange, in particular, having to carry all the water for his troops on oxen for a distance of 600 miles. By the end of April the three columns met and cut off a large body of German troops at Gibeon. They then advanced under the command of General Smuts, towards Windhoek. Meanwhile Botha had advanced from the West, and on May 10th he was informed that the Germans were prepared to surrender. On May 12th his forces entered the town, to find 3,000 Europeans and 12,000 natives. The main German troops had retreated towards Grootfontein, 200 miles to the North. The troops of Botha and Smuts advanced northwards in pursuit, and early in July forced the Germans to surrender.

The shortness of this little campaign is the greatest testimony to the excellence of the strategy of the leaders, and to the dogged courage of the men. The climate of this sandy desert was the greatest enemy; as one of the officers wrote, "Fighting men is a joke to fighting Nature."

### **East Africa.**

One other theatre in Africa remains to be considered—that of East Africa. German East Africa was bounded

by three great lakes : viz. Victoria Nyanza, on the North ; Tanganyika, on the West ; and Nyassa, on the South. North of it lay British East Africa and Uganda, East of it the Belgian Congo, and South, Northern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa. The country itself is one of the most unhealthy and uncomfortable in the world. It is almost entirely thick jungle, containing all the discomforts that are to be found in unpleasant, damp, tropical countries, such as malaria, insects, reptiles, and wild animals. It may be observed that the nature of the country rendered it an excellent theatre for the performances of the machine-gun—an instrument in the use of which the Germans were experts.

### **The Disaster at Tanga.**

At the beginning of the war men could not be spared for the defence of our East African colonies or to conquer the German, and we relied on local volunteers and a few troops sent from India. These troops remained on the defensive until November, in which month it was determined to take the offensive, and a force under General Aitken, and consisting mostly of the Bangalore Brigade, arrived off Tanga, a small jungle town on the northern part of the coast. This force consisted of the 1st Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashires, the 95th Infantry, the 101st Grenadiers, the 61st Pioneers, the 73rd Palamcottahs, the 1st Kashmir Rifles, and some detachments of Imperial Service troops, together with two Mountain Batteries. This force, escorted by two gunboats, appeared off Tanga and demanded its surrender. The officer in charge of the town asked for twenty-four hours' grace in order that he might communicate with the



Governor, who, he said, was absent. This was granted, but when the British forces attacked, they realised that they had been the victims of a hoax. The country around the town was thick jungle, mostly wild rubber trees, and dense with insects. As they advanced through the thick jungle they were met by the deadly machine-gun fire of the Germans. The Loyal North Lancashires, ably led, and fighting with a courage worthy of the North of England, were not dismayed, and with the 101st Grenadiers and the 61st Pioneers actually entered the town. The 73rd Palamcottahs were either not so well led, or else did not follow so well.

The assault was a dismal fiasco. The Loyal North Lancashires lost 2 officers and over 100 men, while of the 101st Grenadiers, one officer alone returned. Our force was withdrawn, landed in British East Africa, and there undertook garrison duty until additional and adequate forces could be gathered for the campaign.

### **Smuts.**

At the same time as the unsuccessful attack on Tanga, we attacked Longido, south of the Nairobi railway, and took it, and in December we took Jassin, nearer the coast. Early in January, 1915, however, we had to withdraw from Jassin, in the defence of which the Kashmir Rifles showed the greatest bravery, and for the rest of the year we were on the defensive. It was clear that we had under-estimated the strength of the Germans, who, it was afterwards learnt, had 5,000 Europeans and 20,000 trained native troops. At the end of April General Tighe arrived from India and assumed the chief command, but all he could do was to wait for reinforcements and

make preparations for an invasion of the German colony. That invasion was delayed until 1916, for it was impossible to spare men from the other fronts for the purpose. However, early in 1916, several additional brigades arrived from South Africa, and in February, General Smuts, the successful West African leader, took command. He started an attack, the preparation for which had been made by General Tighe, in the direction of Mount Kilimanjaro. He was at once successful, and was able to establish his headquarters at Moschi. In the Summer he advanced again, and in August the central railway, running from Dar-es-Salaam and Ujiji, on Lake Tanganyika, was cut. A glance at the map will show that this meant an advance of 300 miles ; and, indeed, all the operations in this part of the world were on a large scale. In September, Dar-es-Salaam itself, which was the capital of German East Africa, fell into our hands, and shortly afterwards we occupied the ports of Kiliva and Lindi. The Germans now retired to the River Rufiji, which enters the Indian Ocean south of Dar-es-Salaam.

### **The Germans Defeated.**

Meanwhile, an attack under General Northey had been made in the south, from Northern Rhodesia, and on September 11th captured Tabora, which had been the headquarters of the Southern German force. Here they found about 100 English men and women, who had been imprisoned by the Germans, and treated with the most disgraceful barbarity. The northern half of the southwestern quarter of the colony was now clear of Germans, and there was no doubt as to the eventual result of the campaign. The matter was one which required time,

and it was many months before the colony was completely freed. In 1917 General Smuts gave up the command, and in May General Van der Venter was put in charge of the operations. There were a large number of small engagements, in which the strategy of the British commanders showed itself greatly superior to that of the enemy, and gradually the Germans were squeezed into the south-east corner of the province, and by the end of the year their forces surrendered, except for small roving bands, which were ultimately "rounded up."

The campaign in East Africa was not a spectacular one, nor was it carried out with the dramatic rapidity of that in German South-West Africa. The country was a vast one, containing 350,000 square miles, and was, for the most part, almost impenetrable. It was only by persistent hard work and uncomplaining endurance that the successful result was brought about.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### The Dardanelles and Gallipoli.

THE story of Gallipoli is one of heroic failure. It was, first, an attempt at the impossible, namely to attack land forts from the sea, a manœuvre which, throughout history, has failed ; and, secondly, it was an attempt made by an inadequate army with insufficient information to undertake a style of fighting to which it was unaccustomed, against a trained enemy who had perfected the art. It was doomed to failure from the very start, but even its failure was encouraging, for it proved to the people of the Empire that their army never knew when it was beaten.

When Turkey joined Germany, in the Autumn of 1914, Russia was cut off from the Allies except by way of the North, and here she had no port which was open for ships during the Winter. It therefore became necessary for the Allies to force the way of the Dardanelles. It was thought at the time that the attempt would be impracticable, but in 1915 the demands of Russia were so insistent that an expedition was sent. There had by this time, however, been so much delay that the Turks, always acting on the advice of the Germans, had strengthened their forts and armed them with heavy guns of the latest pattern.

### **The Attempt by Sea.**

In the Spring of 1915, a combined French and British fleet attacked the forts. It was at this time that we first heard of the Queen Elizabeth, that amazing battleship which could fire a shell of 1,800 lbs. at a distance of 12 miles. We succeeded in demolishing the earlier forts, and every day it was thought that we should get through to Constantinople. As a matter of fact, we only got about halfway, and were met by difficulties which prevented any further advance. The first was the constant gales, which rendered navigation difficult and the shooting inaccurate; the second was the floating mines which the Turks set in the sea at the East end of the Straits, and which were carried down by the current which all the year sets from East to West. The attempt was given up, but not before we had lost two valuable ships, the Irresistible and the Ocean, and the French one, the Bouvet.

### **The First Landing.**

An attempt was now made to force the Dardanelles and reach Constantinople by land, and it was decided to despatch an expeditionary force to the peninsula of Gallipoli. The commander of the expedition was General Sir Ian Hamilton, an officer of great experience. His force contained, among others, a large body of Australian and New Zealand troops, who, from their bravery in this expedition, gained the popular name of "Anzacs" (from the first letters of the words Australian and New Zealand Army Corps). He also had a French corps, under General D'Amade. The landing, which was planned for the end of April, 1915, was to be made at six points at the southern point of the peninsula, while the Australians

were to disembark about fifteen miles further North, the object being to attack the Turks from two sides. The landing nowhere was easy, for the Turks had fortified the peninsula most thoroughly and our men were met with cannon, machine-guns, explosive mines in the sea and on the beach, and barbed wire; but the greatest difficulties were experienced at a point called Beach W., where the Lancashire Fusiliers showed great bravery, and at Sedd-el-Bahr, where the Munsters, the Hampshires, and the Dublin Fusiliers effected a landing at the expense of many lives. Further north, 12,000 Australians and New Zealanders were landed near Gaba Tepe, at a place named after the corps, "Anzac."

### **Krithia and Sari Bair.**

Even when the great difficulties of the landing had been surmounted, it was very difficult to advance because of the number of machine-guns and the net-works of barbed wire employed by the Turks. After a courageous but unsuccessful assault on the hill called Achi Baba, the attack was halted, until, on May 6th, reinforcements arrived—more Australians, some Indian troops, and a Naval Brigade. An advance was made on the town of Krithia, and a battle, lasting three whole days, took place, at the end of which the whole of our forces, though exhausted by the continuous fighting, charged the Turkish positions, and though they did not take Krithia, they advanced their line almost half-a-mile. For the next month there was only local engagements, for our losses at Krithia had been terrible, and trench warfare, as on the Western front, had taken the place of open fighting. There were several cases of brilliant local

fighting, particularly that of two companies of a Gurkha regiment, who captured a very strongly fortified hill, which was after known as "Gurkha Bluff." Another general advance was made in June, where the French made a notable advance; but it was clear that no progress could be made without reinforcements and more ammunition. The heat was intense, pestilential insects of every known sort abounded, and there was hardly any water. It is a wonder that our men did not break down under such a strain, yet they not only bore their hardships and sufferings heroically, but actually made jokes about them. Desultory fighting went on until August when considerable reinforcements arrived. On August 6th, the first Australian Brigade covered themselves with glory at a position known as "Lone Pine," and on the ridge known as Sari Bair there was an important battle, lasting for three days, in which the Turks inflicted terrible losses on our men, the Thirteenth Division losing 6,000 out of 10,500. We held the ridge of Sari Bair, but the actual peaks still remained in Turkish hands.

### **Suvla Bay.**

Meanwhile, a surprise landing had been made at Suvla Bay, north of Sari Bair. The Turks were taken unawares and the landing was a complete success, but "something went wrong," and the water supply was inadequate. Our men fought most gallantly, but quite clearly "someone had blundered," and although we advanced, our main object was not gained. It now seemed certain that no general advance was possible, and the position was very nearly a desperate one. Our losses had been frightful, and entirely out of proportion to our gains. To achieve

our objects we wanted more men, but could more men be spared? Sir Ian Hamilton cabled for reinforcements, but all the troops the Empire could raise were needed elsewhere.

On August 21st, a last desperate attempt was made, near a mountain called "Chocolate Hill." This was as heroic an effort as the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, and as ineffective in its results on the campaign as a whole. We gained some ground but not our main objectives. At the same time, another offensive by Anzacs, which lasted a week, was launched further North and likewise resulted in a certain amount of success but not as much as was hoped or expected.

### **General Birdwood.**

In November Sir Ian Hamilton returned to England and General Sir George Birdwood, who had commanded the Australian troops and was known as the "Soul of Anzac," took over the supreme command. Sir Ian Hamilton, on returning home, resigned his command, and was probably justified in so doing, for he felt that he had not been supported by the Home Authorities, and therefore could not hope for success; but, on the other hand, he had such a personal interest in the campaign, that he could not even think of withdrawing from an enterprise upon which he had once embarked.

General Birdwood was not only an able commander, but, as his nick-name "Birdie" implies, was beloved of his men, almost to adoration. His business now was the hard and unpleasant task of withdrawing our forces from the peninsula, a feat which was as difficult and dangerous as one as had been the landing of the troops. The evacua-



tion took place in December and the first week of January, 1916; and so cunningly and secretly were the various operations carried out that we had only one casualty. In many cases the Turkish lines were within a few yards of ours; but by using various devices, such as dummy guns, representations of men, and so forth, we managed to delude the Turks into the belief that we were still in our trenches, when in actual fact we had left them. The whole operation, involving so much time and labour, was a triumph of organisation.

### **Staff-work.**

Success in modern warfare depends upon the excellence (or the reverse) of the staff-work. The staff is the mind of the army. With a good staff an inferior commander is not likely to fail; with a bad one, the best can do nothing. It is much to be regretted that Sir Ian Hamilton did not make a good choice in his staff officers, for the Gallipoli disaster (apart from the question as to whether it was, in itself, a good move) was due to defective-staff work. It was the excellence of the German staff that won them their early successes. It was the super-excellence of our staff-work that won the war, when we beat the Germans at their own game. We won the war because our staff was better than the German staff—but before we won it we failed at Gallipoli.

### **The Navy.**

That Gallipoli was not a greater disaster was due, almost entirely, to our Navy. That unique force had already essayed the impossible in attempting to take land forts with naval guns; but in the landing at Gallipoli, and still

more so in the evacuation, the part played by the Navy cannot be overestimated. Our Navy, as our Navy has always done, proved itself better than the best. We lost ships—the Irresistible and the Ocean have been mentioned above—and besides, we lost the Goliath, with 500 men, and also the Triumph and the Majestic. But the men of these ships saved countless lives, while the men of the Royal Naval Brigade showed that the English sailor is as handy a man ashore as he is at sea.

The attempt to force the Dardanelles by sea was a failure, and Gallipoli was a disaster ; but it was a disaster as glorious as a victory. Failure as it was, and failure as the fighting man knew it was destined from the first moment to be, our soldiers and sailors never faltered or hesitated. They bore unimagined sufferings with almost superhuman fortitude : they carried out orders with cheerfulness : they faced danger with a jest on their lips. Each unit and each individual, whether Londoner, Scotsman, Australian, or Indian, knew how precious a thing it is to have won a reputation and to be able to live up to it.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### Egypt and Palestine.

THE political situation in Egypt at the beginning of the war was somewhat curious. The nominal ruler was the Khedive, who was supposed to be a vassal of the Sultan of Turkey; but, in actual fact, it was governed by the British, and the Egyptian Army was, to all intents and purposes, part of the British Army. When war broke out, Germany expected that the Egyptians would rise against us; but here, as elsewhere, she was mistaken. The Khedive was a lover of the Germans and of the Turks, but, when war was declared with Turkey, he had not the courage of his convictions, and he fled to Vienna. His uncle, Hussein, was made Sultan of Egypt, and Egypt became a British instead of a Turkish Protectorate.

#### The First Attack on the Canal.

Early in 1915 the Turks attacked Egypt and the Suez Canal. Their commander, Djemal Pasha, was a bold man, for not only had his army to cross more than 150 miles of desert from their base at Beersheba, in Palestine, but the Egyptian force was a strong one, and was thoroughly prepared. The attack on the Canal was made on February 2nd, in the direction of Ismailia and the

Bitter Lakes. The Turks were driven back from the Canal with considerable losses, and would perhaps have been annihilated but for a sandstorm which prevented our men from pursuing them.

For several months, quiet prevailed, on the whole, in Egypt, for the fact was that between Palestine and Egypt lay the desert of Sinai, and while our troops had no need or desire to advance through the desert, the Turks were not strong enough in numbers, or sufficiently well equipped to attack us.

### **Arabia revolts.**

In April, 1916, the Turks were preparing for a second attack on the Canal, but their attention was diverted by trouble in another part of the empire. The Arabs of the Hedjaz, sick and tired of ages of Turkish misrule, revolted, and occupied the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina. Arabia was acknowledged by the Allies as an independent power, and the Grand Sherif of Mecca proclaimed a Holy War against Turkey. In August, however, the Turks advanced on the Canal, but were met some distance to the east of it by a force of Australians, New Zealanders and Territorials, who, after two days' hard fighting, drove them back into the desert with a loss of 10,000 men.

In the Autumn of 1916, Sir Archibald Murray, who was in command of the British troops, determined to clear the Peninsula of Sinai of Turks, and prepared to move eastward into the wilderness. To make any advance at all, however, it was first necessary to lay down railways and lines of water-pipes, as otherwise communications would have been utterly impossible. This

was the beginning of what later was to be the most impressive and spectacular campaign of the whole war.

### **The British Advance.**

The advance started at the end of November, and on December 21st, El Arish, which had been the Turkish headquarters, was reached. This place was unoccupied when our troops arrived, the Turks having taken up a strong position at Magdhaba, about 25 miles further South. Here, on December 23rd, an important action was fought, in which our troops, under General Dobell, captured 1,600 unwounded prisoners and a quantity of stores. On January 9th, 1917, the city of Rafa was captured, and the frontier of Egypt and Syria was reached. The objective now was a line running from Gaza, to Beersheba, in South Palestine, or the country of the Philistines in Old Testament times. The time had not however arrived for an advance into Palestine, for the railway and pipe line had to be brought as far as Rafa, and the work was not completed until March.

### **Gaza.**

In the third week of March, General Murray attacked Gaza, and after a battle which lasted for two days, captured an important hill called Al Muntar, and surrounded the city. It was, however, found impossible to take the city by storm, owing to the arrival of Turkish reinforcements, and since there was no water either for the men or for the horses our troops returned to the sand-hills by the seashore. The first battle of Gaza was not a victory, for we had failed to take the city, but the Turkish and German casualties were twice as great as ours, and

we had made it safe for us to advance the railway further north. This was done in the next three weeks : cisterns were put up in the Wadi Ghuzze, a ravine leading down to the sea, and in them water was stored which was brought by rail all the way from Egypt. But, in the meanwhile, the Turks had strengthened their army, and it was more than twice as strong as it had been in the first battle. However, Sir Archibald Murray determined again to attempt to capture Gaza. The reason for this second attempt, in spite of the Turkish superiority, was political. It was required to make an attack in Palestine at the same time as the big combined attack on the Western Front. The second battle of Gaza, on April 17th, was a failure, for we were unable to make any impression on the enemy, and our casualties were very heavy. This second failure must have been a great disappointment to General Murray, after the long and successful work of building and organising the railway from Egypt, and the brilliantly conducted campaign in the wilderness. The fact is that the Turks were superior to us in numbers and were skilfully led by Generals Djemal Pasha and the German, Kress von Kressenstein.

### **Changes of Command.**

After the second battle of Gaza, there was an important change of command. Sir Archibald Murray returned home to report, and his place was taken by Sir Edmund Allenby, a commander who had served with the greatest distinction on the Western Front, and who was destined to achieve even higher renown.

Meanwhile, on the enemy's side, although there was no change of command, General von Falkenhayn had arrived

at Aleppo with instructions at all costs to restore to Turkey the territory she had lost. If therefore an advance was to be made at all, it had to be made quickly. Nothing could be done in the heat of the Summer, but in October General Allenby began by an attack on the other end of the Turkish line, and on the 31st of the month, Australian troops captured the village of Beersheba—a surprise attack—taking 2,000 prisoners and 15 guns. Gaza was next attacked and fell on November 7th. The Turks fled along the coast to the north, followed by our cavalry, who also cut the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway on the 13th, and entered Jaffa, or Joppa, itself on the 16th.

### **Jerusalem Taken.**

Our immediate object was now Jerusalem, and in spite of difficulties, owing to the hilly nature of the country, that object was soon gained, and on December 9th the enemy surrendered the city. Two days later General Allenby, accompanied only by a small staff, entered the city, and on Mount Zion, at the foot of the Tower of King David, made his proclamation to the inhabitants. He said that he desired "that every person should pursue his lawful business without fear of interruption," and that, since Jerusalem was a Holy City, every sacred building, shrine, and place of prayer would be respected and protected.

The fall of Jerusalem was perhaps the greatest Allied triumph of the whole war. It is a city sanctified by three of the world's great religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—and had been a prize coveted by the great nations of the earth for centuries. Yet, although many warriors and captains had fought for Jerusalem,

"No conqueror," says Col. Buchan, "had ever entered it with more prestige. For centuries there had been current an Arab prophecy concerning a Deliverer from the West. . . The people of Palestine . . . had been told that . . . the true Saviour would bear the name of a Prophet of God, and would enter Jerusalem on foot, and would not appear till the Nile flowed into Palestine. To the peasants of Judæa, the prophecy now seemed to be fulfilled, for the name of the English general was, in Arabic, the 'Prophet,' and his men had come into the land bringing with them the waters of Egypt."

### **The Turkish Army Split.**

After Jerusalem, Allenby commenced a series of operations which must rank as the most highly successful in this war, if not in any campaign. The Turkish army, after the fall of Jerusalem, was split into two sections. These two forces Allenby now drove north towards Shechem (Nablus), and east towards the Jordan, our troops following them up with the intention of cutting the Hedjaz railway. On February 21st Jericho was captured, and the Turks retired behind the River Jordan. Here, for a time, no advance was possible, for a large number of Allenby's troops were removed from Palestine to take part in the great operations in progress on the Western Front, and he had to wait for troops from India ; but, in the meanwhile, the Arabian army of the new kingdom of the Hedjaz was moving up from the South, and from their base at Akaba, along the Hedjaz railway, a column of it, under the Sherif Feisul, was not far from the town of Ammon, east of Jericho and the Dead Sea. During these months, our airmen were likewise



very busy, and successfully carried out daily raids upon the Turkish positions. During the Summer, two Indian divisions—the 7th (Meerut) and the 3rd from Lahore—arrived from Mesopotamia, and a number of Indian cavalry regiments and infantry battalions from India. By the middle of September Allenby was prepared to advance.

### **The Great Advance.**

In the twelve days which followed the 19th of September, 1918, palpable miracles came to pass. Allenby's line started at Jaffa and ran due East until it reached the valley of the Jordan, after which it turned South and followed the line of the river to the Dead Sea. General Allenby's commanders were General Bulfin on the extreme left, with the 21st Corps (among whom were the Indian troops); behind him was General Chauvel, with the Desert Mounted Corps, an extremely mobile body, whose particular function was to pursue the enemy when he was beaten. To the right of these two forces, that is to say, in the centre of the line, was the 20th Corps, under General Chetwode; while on the extreme right, facing east, was General Chaytor, with the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, and some other miscellaneous troops. About 100 miles to the East, and on the other side of the Turkish forces, were the Arabian troops, under Sherif Feisul. Allenby's plan was to advance with his left wing (the 21st Corps) and drive the Turks back North and East until they were outflanked, when they would be driven Eastward and caught between the 21st Corps and the 20th and the River Jordan. Meanwhile, those that crossed the Jordan would be dealt with by Feisul's army, which was to advance along the Hedjaz railway.

The attack was, however, started by a feint, the Australians on the right first attacking the eastern portion of the Turkish army. The Turks, thinking that General Allenby was trying to crush their left between his forces and those of Feisul, sent reinforcements to that part of the line ; whereupon Allenby, with incredible swiftness, advanced his left, drove back the Turks through a quadrant to the east, and had the main portion of the Ottoman army surrounded on three sides. All this took exactly nine days to accomplish.

At the same time, the Australians and New Zealanders had joined hands with the Arabian force, and the whole Turkish force was caught, as it were, in a great oval net. Three Turkish armies had melted away, and our troops had taken over 60,000 prisoners and more than 300 guns.

### **The R.A.F.**

It should be mentioned that one of the chief causes of the success of these brilliant operations was the superb work of our airmen. So admirable had been their work during the heat of the summer, and in the weeks preceding the great attack, that the Turkish Air Force was literally annihilated. They had no machines to go up, and consequently they could not learn anything about the dispositions of our forces or of our plans of attack. Of the many occasions on which the Royal Air Force rendered signal service during the war, there was perhaps none, not even during the German attack in 1918, where they were more useful.

### **Damascus, Beirut, and Aleppo.**

After their disaster in Central Palestine, not more than 17,000 Turks and Germans remained, and probably

three-quarters of these were not fit for fighting, and the Arabian army and our forces advanced with great rapidity on Damascus, which was entered on October 1st. Jerusalem was a great prize, but Damascus was hardly less. She is the oldest inhabited city in the world, and for nearly thirty centuries she has been the centre of trade between Europe and Asia. She is a sacred city, and she contains the tomb of Saladin, the greatest of the Paynims.

Still Allenby did not rest. On the 7th a force entered the important seaport of Beirut, the harbour of which had previously been entered by French men-of-war. On the 26th, Aleppo, a city of 250,000 inhabitants, and, like Damascus, an important junction of the caravan routes, was captured. This was the capital of Turkey-in-Asia, and was the military base of the Turkish army.

### **Turkey Seeks Peace.**

Allenby's army was now only a few miles from that of General Marshall, and in a few days they would have joined hands. As it was, the way to Constantinople was clear, and the Turkish Empire was falling to pieces. Turkey asked for an armistice, which was granted on October 31st. Its terms were, roughly, the complete surrender of Turkey.

### **Allenby's Achievement.**

General Allenby's achievement entitles him to a place as one of the greatest of military leaders. One of his peculiar excellences was his masterly use of cavalry. Among his mounted men were the Desert Mounted Corps, which, during the last operations, took over 46,000 prisoners; the Australian Mounted Division;

the Yeomanry from the British Isles ; and the Indian Cavalry. The latter did particularly well, for they were, to a great extent, new to actual fighting, and many, indeed, were little more than recruits. The organisation of the supplies and transport were equally wonderful. To have conquered a desert of 150 miles, which had baffled every other army, and to have brought the waters of the Nile to Palestine, were superlative feats, and there were other branches no less notable. The supply and upkeep of the armies of camels was a great achievement. Thousands of these animals were obtained from all parts of Asia and Africa, and their maintenance was so good, that, of camels who were sent to hospital, wounded or sick, 60 per cent. were returned fit and sound. The services rendered by the Royal Air Force have been mentioned above. It would be impossible to over-estimate their value.

It may be noted that General Allenby's force comprised men from all parts of the world. There were troops from Australia, India, New Zealand, and the West Indies. There was an amazing number of languages and dialects spoken, and a vast number of differing creeds. It should be noticed, however, that at the conclusion of the campaign, two-thirds of the whole army were Muhammedans. The Turks had shown that they were no true leaders of Islam, and all true followers of the Prophet looked to Mecca and not to St. Sophia as the centre of their belief.

### **Colonel Lawrence.**

It is impossible to close the story of this part of the war without reference to a great Englishman, whose

achievements, until after the war was over, were unknown and unpublished. This was Colonel Thomas Lawrence, a young archæologist, who, at the beginning of the war, was in Palestine writing a history of the Crusades. His profound knowledge of Arabic and of the character, habits, and religious beliefs of Arabs of every class and tribe recommended him to the British Government, and he was despatched on a secret mission to Arabia. Exactly what part he took in the successful revolt of Arabia from Turkish rule, and the establishment of the Grand Sherif of Mecca as King of the Hedjaz, need not be discussed here. It is enough to say that, in a short time, he became "the uncrowned King of Arabia." He was thought to be something superhuman, and, although he was never worshipped as John Nicholson was by the Sikhs, still the respect and love which he inspired was no less than that paid to Nikhalseyn. He was nominally Chief-of-Staff to Prince Feisul, son of the King of the Hedjaz, but, in fact, he was the soul and mind of the Arab army. To him was due the blowing up of no less than 17 Turkish troop-trains on the Hedjaz railway, and the successful advance of the Arabian army to Damascus in October, 1918. Colonel Lawrence was the first of the Allies to enter Damascus, and was, for the first ten days after its occupation, Governor of the city. Diplomatic reasons and his own hatred of publicity prevented his achievements from being more widely known and recognised; but future historians of Arabia and the Middle East will perceive in him a worthy successor of such great English leaders and pioneers as Lord Clive, General Gordon, John Nicholson, and Sir Richard Burton.

## CHAPTER XX.

### Mesopotamia, etc.

FOR many years before 1914, Germany, in pursuance of her policy as a world-power, had been attempting to obtain a footing in Asia. Her missionaries, religious and otherwise, had attempted to spread German influence in India, Persia, and China ; her merchants were establishing connections in every part of the continent. But, in particular, she had attempted to establish a "sphere of influence" in the tract of country which lies between the Aegean Sea and the Persian Gulf. She found the highway to the Far East in the hands of the British, and determined to set up a rival shorter route, following more or less the old caravan track through what is usually called Asia Minor. This route would start from either Constantinople or Smyrna, and would pass through the ancient city of Baghdad to the Persian Gulf, with a side-line leading into Persia, and ultimately connecting with the Trans-Siberian Railway. With this end in view various railways were actually constructed, or were in course of construction, by means of German capital. German capitalists and statesmen looked forward to the day when a railway service, managed by German capital and run for German purposes, would

start from Berlin, and, by way of Constantinople, end at Delagoa Bay in one direction, at Vladivostock in another, and at Karachi in another. Further, if a great Asiatic railway system, under German control, could be inaugurated, it was hoped that the resources of such countries as Armenia and Persia could be exploited for the benefit of Germany.

### **Persian Oil.**

Persia is a country in which there are important oil-wells, and early in the twentieth century a Company had been formed, partly by British and partly by Persian capital, to bring this oil down to the sea, and so obtain a market for it. A line of pipes conveying the oil from the springs had been built, and ran from Persia South to the North end of the Persian Gulf. When war broke out, therefore, it was necessary to protect this pipe line, and accordingly a force was despatched from India to safeguard it. This force was commanded by General Delamain, and consisted of the Poona Brigade, among whom was the 2nd Battalion of the Dorset regiment. This force landed in the Autumn of 1914 at the island of Bahrein.

### **The Advance from Basra.**

At the end of October war was declared upon Turkey. In the first week of November, the British forces started advancing towards Basra, up the Shat-el-Arab, and a few days later the rest of the Indian troops arrived, namely the Ahmadnagar and Belgaum Brigades. On the 22nd General Barrett, who was now in command of the force, entered Basra itself. In the previous fighting

we had lost about 350 men, mostly in the Dorsets, while the Turkish casualties were over 1,500. A detachment was now sent forward to Kurna, 50 miles above Basra, where the rivers Tigris and Euphrates meet, and which surrendered on December 9th. The capture of these two places was exceedingly important. Basra is an important post, where the Anglo-Persian pipe line comes down to the coast, while Kurna is the highest point up the two rivers to which ocean-going steamers can ascend. But what was of greater importance, was that the Turks could no longer even think of an invasion of India. Very great results had been achieved at a very small cost.

The situation was, however, not entirely satisfactory, for Turkey still had plenty of troops higher up the river and near Baghdad, and, accordingly, reinforcements were sent to Basra, under General Sir John Nixon, who, when he arrived, took supreme command of the operations there. These troops arrived none too early. There was some fighting in March, and, on April 20th, what was quite an important battle was fought at Shaiba, south of Basra. This action cleared the delta of Turkish troops. Our losses were slight, perhaps some 700 officers and men, but the Turks must have lost over 5,000.

### **Trade-routes.**

The primary object of the campaign was thus secured, and the Germans were cut off from the Far East. It was clear, however, that if it were possible, a very much more extensive and comprehensive expedition might be shaped out of the present small one. From time



immemorial the trade-routes to Central and Southern Asia have concentrated at Baghdad. On the West are the two Mediterranean highways from Aleppo and Damascus: on the North that from Trebizond, the port for Russia: while to the East are the roads which ultimately communicate with Merv in Turkestan, Herat in Afghanistan, and further South, Bandar Abbas in Southern Persia, and Karachi in India. If, therefore, we could capture Baghdad all these highways of commerce would be in our hands, and it was calculated that the commerce of the East would be better if it were in British hands than if it were in German, for the Germans had never been true friends to any Asiatic or Eastern people.

With the knowledge of these important facts and with a determined intention of assisting India and the Middle East, the campaign was extended. In its execution it was exactly unlike the Russian campaign, for it began with failure and ended with the most triumphant success. It was a campaign which, when it began, was considered a mere "side-show," but which, in the later months, and in combination with the campaign in Palestine, helped very much more than has generally been imagined towards the break-down of the Central Powers. The enterprise was a hazardous one, but it was carried out with confidence and (as was ultimately proved) with success. But it was a proposition entirely different from that on which the expedition originally entered.

#### **Nasiriyeh.**

In the middle of Mesopotamia, and nearly half-way between Baghdad and Basra, a channel, called the

Shat-el-Hai, runs between the Tigris and the Euphrates. At the point where the channel joins the Tigris, lies the important town of Kut-el-Amara. At the other end of it, on the Euphrates, lies the village of Nasiriyeh. These were two points which it was absolutely necessary to obtain in order that the campaign might be a success.

Early in July, an expedition under General Gorringe started against Nasiriyeh. The force which attempted it was partly on shore and partly on the river, and the campaign, owing to the various natural obstacles—such as mosquitoes and forests and river-currents—was one of the most uncomfortable ever undertaken by British troops. However, by July 24th, our troops were outside the town, and on July 25th an attack by land and by the river was started and resulted in the capitulation of the place. The success thus obtained was a considerable one, for the Turks lost over 2,500 men, of whom 700 were made prisoners; while our losses were less than 600.

### **Kut-el-Amara.**

Early in August an attempt was made against the second important position, Kut-el-Amara; and in the first week of that month a division, under General Townshend, was sent to advance up the Tigris. The country was marshy, and it was necessary to build bridges over the canals, and the Turks very cunningly withdrew slowly, hoping to draw our troops on to a point which would be too far from their base for stores, munitions, and reinforcements to be able easily to be sent to the front. On September 29th, however, British cavalry entered the town, and the two ends of

the canal were in our hands, and the whole Turkish force had disappeared.

So far our success had been striking. We had, with a little army of about 15,000 men, cleared the lower half of Mesopotamia and kept the Turks from the Persian Gulf. A proposal was, however, now made to advance still further, and to attempt to reach Baghdad. The reason for this was, undoubtedly, political. The Allies' advance in the West had been checked. Serbia was practically isolated, and Bulgaria was about to join Germany. Italy was making no progress, and Russia was inactive. A success was also needed to balance the failure at the Dardanelles. Baghdad was only 100 miles away, and if it could be taken it would encourage our troops and those of our Allies, and it would thus be a great achievement politically. Those who proposed it forgot, however, that Baghdad was 300 miles from the base at Basra, and that our force was considerably outnumbered, and that the lines of communication could easily be cut at any moment by small hostile bands. That Baghdad, being an "open" city, could not be held easily; and that supplies could not be obtained in large enough quantities to tide over the hot weather of 1916. The expedition, indeed, was doomed to be a failure before it began.

#### **Ctesiphon: Kut invested.**

Immediately, however, the attempt seemed likely to be successful. General Townshend advanced, and after four days, on November 21st, found himself against the ruined city of Ctesiphon, the ancient capital of Parthia and Persia. Here, where the Romans and

Parthians had fought centuries before, took place a battle which lasted for two days, at the end of which General Townshend's force, which was now less than two-thirds of its original strength, was forced, although unbeaten, to retire. He could not advance: he could not stay where he was without support. On December 3rd, Townshend was back again at Kut-el-Amara, only now, instead of leading a successful offensive, he had to defend himself as in a besieged town. On Christmas Eve, the Turks made a violent attack on the place, but were driven out by the 1st Oxford Light Infantry, the 48th Pioneers, and the 2nd Norfolks. Having failed to take the place by storm, they settled down to a regular siege, and by cutting off supplies hoped to force our troops to surrender before relief could come from Basra. Within a few days Kut-el-Amara was entirely surrounded and the only hope for the defenders lay in the chance of a relieving force being able to make its way up the Tigris.

### **Attempts to relieve Townshend.**

Early in 1916 Sir John Nixon, who had been in chief command of the whole expedition, was forced by ill-health to resign and his place taken by Sir Percy Lake. General Lake at once set himself to work to initiate a relieving force, and also to organise better lines of communication, to build light railways, and to establish a service of barges to carry supplies up the river. The relieving force, which was now sent out, consisted of the Lahore Division (which had in 1915 been on the Western Front), and the majority of the Meerut Division, and also some English regiments. It was commanded

by General Aylmer. This force made its way slowly up the river, in spite of heavy enemy opposition and heavy floods, which in places turned the whole of the country near the river into vast lakes, and got to within 20 miles from Kut in a direct line (although the distance by river was more than 60), but by the end of January he found he could advance no further, and for a month he waited for reinforcements. During February the rains ceased and the weather became very cold with a heavy frost at night. This was unpleasant weather, but, at least, it was possible to fight under such conditions, and General Aylmer had, if he was to be successful, to carry out his task before the Summer heat began. Accordingly, in the first week of March, he struck a bold blow, and, instead of advancing along the Tigris, moved straight across the desert so as to attack the besieging forces from the south. A magnificent march of over 20 miles was carried out, in complete silence, on the night of March 7th, and on the 8th the force was within seven miles of Kut, at a point in the Turkish lines called El Sinn. The Turks, however, were prepared, and Aylmer had to retire to his old position. It was a tragedy for the garrison at Kut, which had actually heard the guns of the relieving force.

Another month followed and still no reinforcements were sent to Aylmer. In April the 13th Division, which had been at Gallipoli, arrived, and Aylmer gave over the command to General Gorringe. The new commander attacked twice during April, but could not break through the Turkish lines, and at last sent off a steamer, the *Julnar*, with food, to try to run the

blockade and get through to the garrison. The Julnar, however, ran aground four miles from Kut, and after a splendid fight, fell into the hands of the Turks, who thus obtained our stores instead of our own men.

### **Kut surrenders.**

On April 29th the garrison surrendered. During December, 1915, they had been bombarded daily, and from January 1st, 1916, provisions had begun to run short. Not only was there a great lack of meat and grain, but there were not enough vegetables to prevent an outbreak of scurvy. By the beginning of February no rice or sugar was left, and there was only ten days' supply of milk. On the date of the surrender, the troops, 2,000 English and 6,000 Indians, were practically dying of starvation.

The garrison had held out for 143 days, under the most trying and disheartening conditions, officers and men alike sharing in sufferings which almost passed human endurance. In January General Townshend had told his men, "We will make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one. You will be all proud to say one day, 'I was one of the garrison at Kut.'" His words were justified; yet of the 8,000 who surrendered how many were to live? The Turks, who at first treated our prisoners with chivalry and kindness, soon, under German influence and being themselves short of provisions, showed them the most disgusting cruelty, treating them not as a brave and generous foe, but as something lower than the lowest of mankind. On the sufferings of these brave men it is perhaps best not to dwell.

### **General Maude takes Command.**

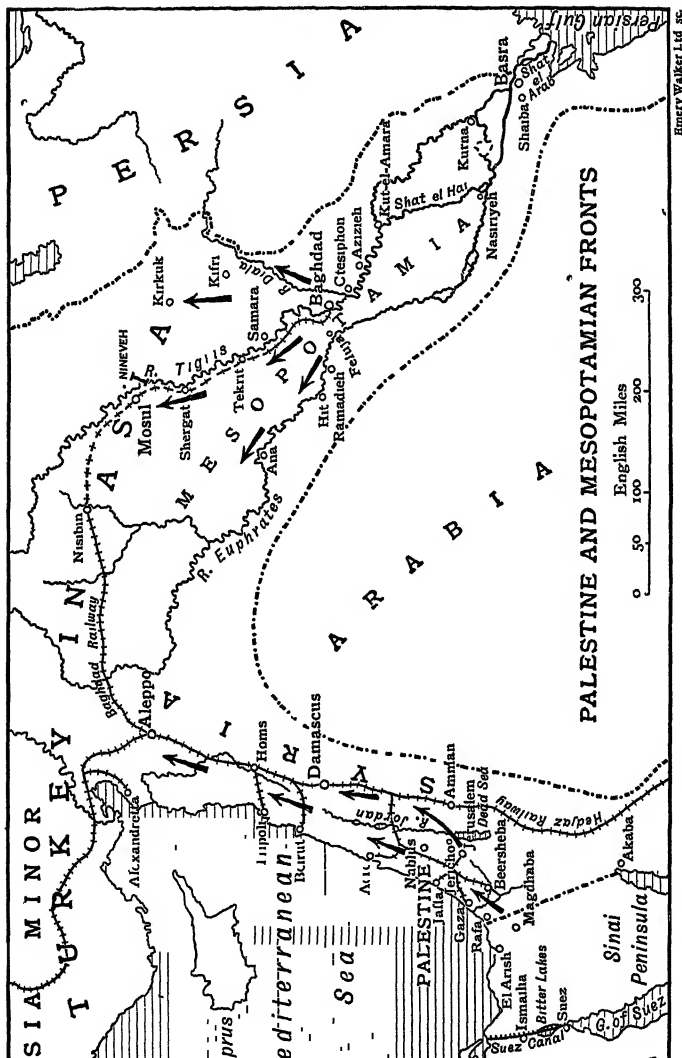
On May 20th General Gorringe advanced to El Sinn, and drove back the Turks to the Shat-el-Hai, but the hot weather had now arrived and operations had to be suspended. During this time there were two changes in the chief command, Sir Percy Lake superseding Sir John Nixon, and himself, in August, giving place to General Maude.

Communications, transport, and the hospital service had been now immensely improved, and by December, when the cold weather came, everything was ready for an advance. The British force was divided into two parts, the north under General Cobbe, and the south under General Marshall.

### **Our Advance.**

A simultaneous attack was made by these two forces, and the Turks were driven back into Kut-el-Amara. By the end of the month, however, there was such heavy rain that the whole country was flooded, and no real progress was possible until the beginning of February. On the 4th of that month, General Marshall's force occupied the whole left bank of the Shat-el-Hai and drove back the Turks to a strong position in a liquorice factory in the angle between the Tigris and the Shat-el-Hai. This post, which was a nest of machine-guns, was captured on February 10th, and by February 16th no Turkish forces were left south of the river.

Meanwhile General Cobbe had advanced along the Tigris to the North and East, and on February 2nd the Seaforth Highlanders and a Punjab battalion had practically broken the Turkish lines. Kut was now surrounded





on three sides—East, South and West, and on February 23rd the river, now swollen by the winter rains, and strongly held by Turkish forces, was crossed by the Norfolks and Gurkhas. The next day Kut-el-Amara fell, and the Turks began a hasty but well-organised retreat towards Baghdad. Our cavalry followed them, and pursued them as far as fifty miles west of Kut-el-Amara, at Azizieh, and half-way to Baghdad itself. In this most successful engagement we sank all the Turkish gunboats, and recaptured three of our own vessels, which had been lost in the previous campaign, while we took 4,000 prisoners (188 of them officers), 39 guns, 22 trench mortars, 11 machine-guns, and a vast quantity of stores and munitions.

### **Baghdad falls.**

To have recaptured Kut so brilliantly was a magnificent achievement, but for General Maude it was but the first step in a larger enterprise, and on March 5th our advance began again. The next day, in spite of dust storms, we reached Ctesiphon, and on the 7th we came across the main body of the enemy, stoutly entrenched on the River Diala, which enters the Tigris from the north, about ten miles south-east of Baghdad itself.

On March 8th, 1917, in spite of heavy fire from rifles and machine-guns, a bridge was thrown across the river, and from the South, on the 11th, General Cobbe's cavalry entered Baghdad itself and reached the railway station. Meanwhile General Marshall's force had crossed the Diala and entered the city from the East.

The capture of Baghdad was one of the great successes of the war. It was the first really important enemy

city to be captured, and the British success was doubly welcome because it followed on a reverse. General Townshend's gallant dash for the city had failed, but by careful organisation we had been able to perform slowly what we had before failed to effect rapidly. It was a proof to the world that the British Empire, even if baffled at the first attempt, would still hold on to its task until it succeeded. Our troops had, for the most part, been fighting for eighteen months in a hard country, with extremes of heat and cold, with various diseases rife, and with, at first, inadequate hospitals and insufficient supplies, but had won in the end by dogged determination and undismayed courage. Sir Stanley Maude said of them: "It may be truly said that not only have the traditions of these ancient British and Indian regiments been in safe keeping in the hands of their present representatives, but that these have even added fresh lustre to the records on their time-honoured scrolls."

### **Further Advances.**

General Maude was not prepared to rest content with his success. As the Turks retreated up the Tigris, they destroyed a large dam above the city, and flooded the whole country for miles around, reaching as far as the Euphrates, which here approached near the Tigris. Several columns were now despatched after the flying enemy. One followed the railway towards the Euphrates and seized Feluja, on the river, and the terminus of the railway. Two others marched up the Tigris, and by April 23rd occupied the other railway terminus, Samara, 80 miles north of Baghdad. Another moved

up the Diala, and joined up with Russian forces coming south from Persia. The approach of summer now put an end to operations, and nothing more of any great importance occurred until the autumn. During these months, however, General von Falkenhayn was gathering together a large force of Turks, Germans, and Austrians at Aleppo, probably with the hope of recapturing Baghdad. General Allenby's force, however, which was advancing triumphantly through Palestine, gave him plenty of food for thought in another direction, and his proposed attack on Mesopotamia never came off. On the other hand, as soon as the climate became cooler, Sir Stanley Maude pushed forward towards the west. At the end of September, a force, consisting of two columns of infantry and some cavalry, moved out from Feluja up the Euphrates, and by a brilliant and rapid move, in which an important part was played by cavalry, encircled and captured the town of Ramadieh, taking prisoner the whole Turkish force, and with it its commander, Ahmed Bey. This was one of the most successful actions of the campaign, and our captures included 3,500 Turks and 13 guns. Shortly afterwards, in October, an advance was made up the Tigris, and on November 6th we occupied Tekrit, the birthplace of Saladin the Great.

### **German Hopes Baffled.**

These two victories, compared with the successes obtained by generals elsewhere, may, at first sight, appear small. In actual fact, they were of great importance, and their importance was two-fold. In the first place, they proved that it was impossible for von Falken-

hayn even to contemplate an attack towards the East ; in the second, they showed that it would be quite possible for our Mesopotamian force to join hands with that fighting in Palestine. If Aleppo were captured and the forces of General Maude and Allenby joined hands, a clear line would be cut between the East and the West. All the trade-routes to the East would be held. Persia and Arabia, whose position was, anyhow, doubtful, would become powerless as factors in the war ; the power of Turkey in Asia would be broken ; and the German dreams of predominance in the Near East broken.

### **A Sudden Tragedy**

When General Townshend first took Kut-el-Amara, his position was precarious and his line of communications unsound. Now, owing to the splendid ability of Sir Percy Lake and Sir Stanley Maude and their Staffs, the position was quite different. Our lines of communication had been made secure ; we had an efficient Labour Corps travelling up the two rivers ; our supplies were guaranteed, and our hospitals and medical service sure. But Sir Stanley Maude was not destined to reap where he had sown. On November 18th he died suddenly of cholera. His death was nothing less than a tragedy, for he died at the height of his success ; yet he may be said to have died happy, for within a short time he had transformed failure into success, and with unfaltering courage and undismayed ability had succeeded in an achievement which in any other war would have been considered a superb triumph. In this war he was but one of the many who achieved incredible successes.

Sir Stanley Maude's post was taken over by General Marshall, who had, as we have seen, already achieved great triumphs, and who now continued the successes of his predecessor by a victory over the Turks at Kifri, on the River Diala.

### **Spring of 1918.**

The collapse of Russia by this time was making itself felt, and early in 1918, all the Turks south of the Caucasus were free to concentrate their energies against our forces in Mesopotamia and Palestine. In Mesopotamia our advance was consequently slower than it had been. However, in the early weeks of the year, we moved up the Euphrates and in March occupied the town of Hit. Later in the same month we captured Ana, about 100 miles west of Baghdad, while in April and May our northern force advanced as far as Kirkuk, 150 miles north of the city. With May the hot weather arrived, and operations were suspended until the autumn.

### **Turkey Crushed.**

In October General Marshall was again able to push forward, and at the end of the month he gained a great victory at Shergat, where the Turkish general, Ismail Hakki, surrendered with 7,000 men. On November 3rd we entered Mosul, on the Upper Tigris, near the ruins of Nineveh. By this time Turkey had tired of the war and had realised that she was defeated. She was now, since Bulgaria's surrender in September, cut off from the Central European powers; and now, when Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad, and Mosul had fallen, she was at the point of being driven out of Asia Minor.

The Mesopotamian campaign had begun as a defensive measure : at the end it had assumed the size of what otherwise would have been an important War, and our success in it helped largely to break the power of Turkey, and, therefore, to isolate Germany and Austria. It had begun with success, but success had been turned to failure ; and failure in its turn changed back, owing to the ability and courage of Generals Maude and Marshall, to a brilliant triumph. Our leaders were magnificent, and the temper of our troops, British and Indian alike, was such that, in spite of hardships, disease, and discomfort, they worthily followed leaders worthy of them.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### Some Minor Fronts.

#### *China.*

THE first of these minor wars—wars within a War—was that in which Japan participated. In the year 1897 Germany, being desirous of making her power felt in the Far East, forced the Chinese Government to grant her a 99 years' lease of the district of Kiao-Chau, on the Shantung Peninsula. The chief town, Tsing-Tau, was fortified and rebuilt at great expense, and was made the base of the German Pacific Fleet. When war broke out Japan, who had every reason to hate the Germans and had always been treated by them with contempt, demanded that Kiao-Chau should be restored to China, and when Germany refused to give up the province, Japan, on August 16th, declared war on Germany. The German fleet, as we have seen, escaped into the Pacific, but on August 27th British and Japanese warships appeared off the Bay of Kiao-Chau and blocked the entrance. Tsing-Tau was an elaborately entrenched camp situated on hills, each of which was a small fortress in itself, built according to the latest pattern. The garrison consisted of 5,000 men, under Admiral Meyer Waldeck.

**Tsing-Tau.**

The Japanese force, which now attacked Tsing-Tau, was a small one, commanded by General Kamio, who, beside infantry, had siege artillery and a flying detachment. The troops were landed on September 2nd, but for some time little could be done because of the heavy rains. In September, however, he captured Kiao-Chau, at the head of the bay, 22 miles from Tsing-Tau itself. Towards the end of this month, a British force, under General Barnardiston, and consisting of South Wales Borderers and half a regiment of Sikhs, arrived. In the last few days of the month Tsing-Tau was bombarded by the Allied forces on land, and by Japanese warships in the mouth of the harbour. For the next month this bombardment continued until, on October 31st, the birthday of the Mikado, nearly all the inner ring of forts was silenced and the way was ready for an assault by infantry. Everything was ready for this attack, but suddenly, on November 7th, the Germans capitulated. Three days later the city was formally handed over to the Japanese. 3,000 German prisoners were sent to Japan, and they lost 2,000 men, almost half their force. The Japanese, out of a force of 23,000, had 236 killed and about 1,300 wounded; while the British losses, out of 1,500, were 12 killed and 61 wounded.

The affair of Tsing-Tau, though only an episode in the war, was remarkable for the amazing skill displayed by General Kamio, and the loyalty of the Japanese. Their armies had been trained by German officers, and many Japanese, when war broke out, thought that Germany would win; yet their sense of Honour overcame their judgment. They fought on the side of what they



thought a lost cause, and to demonstrate an impossible loyalty, the islanders of the East side by side with the islanders of the West.

The policy of Japan was not to interfere with European matters, at least on land; but she sent shells and munitions to Russia, while Russia remained loyal to her pledges and alliances; and when Russia proved a traitor, she sent forces to help to restore order and to assist the real Russians to restore their country to health and sanity. Furthermore, she sent torpedo-boat destroyers to co-operate with the other Allies in the Mediterranean and to preserve the freedom of the seas. Her part in the war was as effective as it was unostentatious.

### *Transcaucasia.*

WE now come to the South Russian front, in what is called Transcaucasia, the country south of the Caucasus Mountains. When Turkey entered the war, this was her most important front, and great expectations were raised. The Turkish general was Hassan Izzet Pasha, but with him was the Commander of all the Turkish armies, Enver Bey, and a large German Staff. With him was an army of not less than 150,000 men. Against these, the Russians, under General Woronzov, had a body of not more than 100,000.

The Turkish plan of campaign was to entice the Russian army across the frontier, and then, when they had advanced some distance from their base, to attack in two directions: in the North towards the port of Batoum, and in the South towards the important cities of Kars and Tiflis, and by this double movement to surround

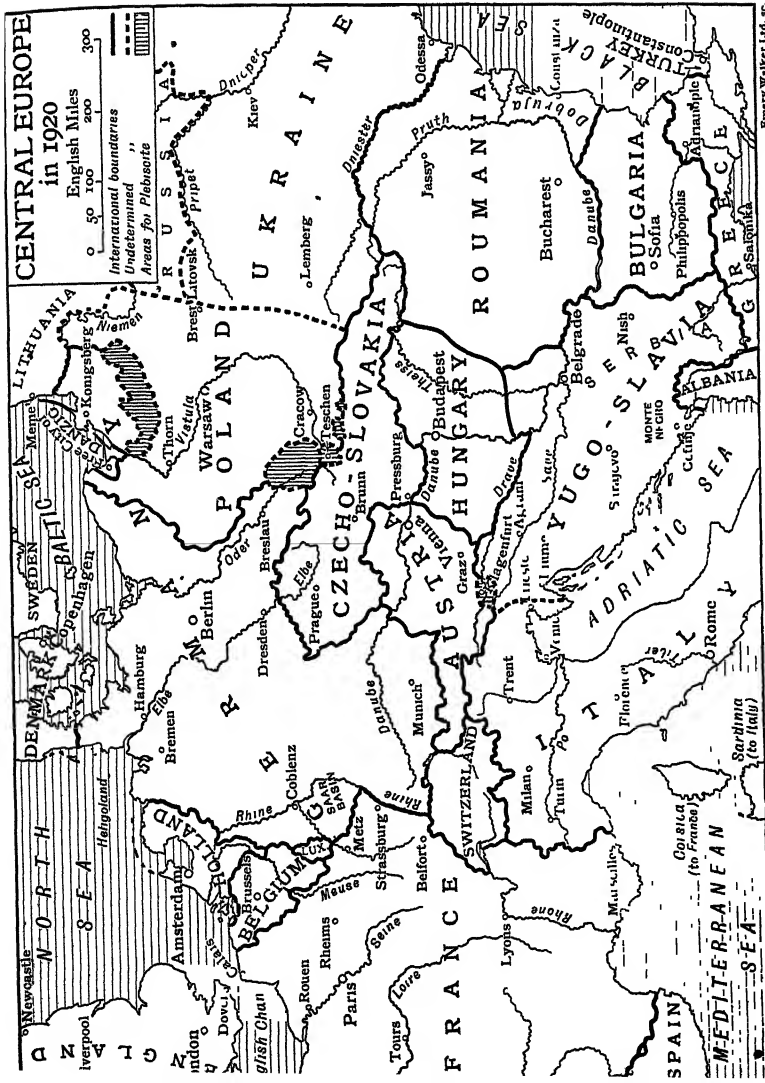
the Russian army. For a while all went well with their plans. The Russians advanced in November, and in December the Turkish offensive began. At the end of the month, however, the Russians not only checked the Turkish advance but broke it up entirely. The Turks ran short of guns and of ammunition. They were almost starving, and they were badly led. In the blizzards and snowstorms of the mountains it is calculated that they must have lost 50,000 men, or one-third of their whole force.

### **Erzerum and Trebizond.**

For several months no serious fighting occurred. The Turks were too weak to attack, and the Russians had no desire to attack, for they needed all their resources against Hindenburg. The Grand Duke Nicholas was appointed Governor General of the Caucasus in September, and prepared for an attack on Turkey-in-Asia. This was entrusted to General Yudenitch, and began early in 1916. The Turks fell back rapidly on the fortress of Erzerum, but on February 16th it was captured by the Russians, with a large number of prisoners and guns. The Russians now advanced still further to the West, along the shores of the Black Sea, and in April occupied the ancient and important port of Trebizond. At the same time they advanced southwards, with the hope of reaching Baghdad and joining hands with the British from Mesopotamia.

### **Persia.**

In May, a Russian force entered Persia, a country which had been largely under Russian influence for



several years, and suppressed a rising in favour of Germany and Turkey. A small party, indeed, riding miles across barren country, actually reached our forces on the Tigris, and it was hoped that the two armies might shortly join hands.

### **Disappointment.**

The Russian hopes were doomed to disappointment. The Turks concentrated in August ; the Russians retired temporarily only to advance again ; but in 1917 the Russian Revolution came and all hope for the Allied cause in the Caucasus was wiped out.

The Russian campaign in Transcaucasia was like that on the main Eastern Front, only on a tiny scale. The Russians advanced, only to be driven back, then advanced still further, again retreated and again advanced. And the end was the same. All the might and resource of that great Empire was turned against itself in what was perhaps the greatest National Tragedy in History.

## PART VII.

### THE ARMISTICE.

An Armistice is a state of affairs in which all fighting between two combatants ceases. It is not the same as a Peace, for, among honourable people, when Peace is signed, there is no hostility. An Armistice means simply that the fighting on both sides is temporarily suspended while matters are discussed. In 1918, however, it was clear that the Armistice would lead to Peace, for Germany was most certainly beaten.

The terms signed on Nov. 11th were chiefly these :

- (1) All invaded countries were to be evacuated within 14 days, and all the people of invaded countries were to be sent back to their homes.
- (2) The German armies were to retire across the Rhine within a month, and what was called a "Neutral Zone" was to be set up, 6 miles broad, between the North Sea and the Swiss Frontier.
- (3) All prisoners of war were to be returned at once.
- (4) Ten German battleships, 6 battle cruisers, 8 light cruisers, 50 destroyers, and all the German submarines were to be handed over.

As soon as the news of the signing of the Armistice was received in London, great crowds of people thronged towards Buckingham Palace and called for the King. It was recognised that his Majesty, throughout the war, had really been the true Representative of his people, and that the best way in which the nation could show its gratitude was to show it to its Sovereign.

On November 15th the German fleet was handed over to the British Navy, and Sir David Beatty issued an order that the German flag should be lowered and should not again be raised without our permission.

On the 25th King Albert of the Belgians entered his capital, Brussels. His title was, and is, King of the Belgians, and he never, through all the war, lost his right to that title. He was, for years, a King without a Country, but he was never a King without a People. When he returned to his capital, there was no need for police or troops to line the streets or to keep order. He came back, a soldier-king among his soldier-subjects, who greeted him as the First man of their nation, their Representative, and their Leader.

Early in December, the Allied troops arrived on the Rhine. the British occupying Cologne, the French Mainz, and the Americans Coblenz.

Many people expected that Peace would be signed within a few weeks, but before that was possible many preliminaries were necessary. A "Peace Conference" met in Paris to discuss the terms of the Peace, to arrange for the payment of an indemnity by Germany, to settle frontiers, and to bring to trial the German officials who had been guilty of atrocities. The chief figures at the conference were M. Clemenceau, Mr. Lloyd-George,

President Wilson, and Baron Sonnino. Their labours were heavy, and the time occupied long; but, ultimately, on June 16th, 1919, the German representatives signed the Peace Treaty. Peace with Austria was made later, and with Turkey on August 10, 1920.

What the final effect of the war upon mankind will be it is impossible to forecast. Valuable lives have been lost, heroic sacrifices have been made—but for what end? We, now, can only say that Justice has triumphed, and German brutality has been defeated.

Let us hope that the World has learnt a lesson.

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